# Miss Brooks

Eliza Orne White

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# *Miss Brooks*

## A Story

BY

ELIZA ORNE WHITE

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TO

M. H. De W.

IN MEMORY OF THE ADIRONDACKS.

# MISS BROOKS.

## CHAPTER I.

Business is labor, and man's weakness such,
Pleasure is labor too, and tires as much.
WILLIAM COWPER.

ONE winter afternoon John Graham and his cousin Charles Otis were walking briskly toward Mrs. Maxwell's house on Commonwealth Avenue in Boston, whither they had been summoned to a reception.

"You know nothing about society, Jack," Otis was saying petulantly; "you take it by the wrong handle. To begin with, you ought to change your tailor."

"It is n't a change of coat that I need, Charles," Graham returned with a smile; "the trouble lies deeper than that: I need a change of heart."

"You expect too much; you are always full of your plans for reconstruction. You forget that you are not dealing with a tract of land to be drained and improved; if you hope to enjoy society, you must conform to its customs."

"It is an unnatural, artificial life," Graham began vehemently; then remembering to whom he

was talking, he checked himself. "Twelve years on the frontier unfit one for civilization," he added quietly.

"You ought to marry!" Otis exclaimed. "A wife would soon put your unconventional ideas to rout; and with all your money, marriage will be a very simple affair."

"How easy a complex civilization makes everything!" mused Graham, with a look of quiet amusement in his eyes. "Now, in the semi-barbarous region from which I have come, money is not all that is necessary."

Graham followed his cousin into Mrs. Maxwell's house and up the crowded stairway with the confused feeling of a man who has been out of the world for a long time. He had a vague sense of tropical plants and subdued light, and of ladies in fur and feathers, who for some unaccountable reason were all eager to talk. He wondered how they could find so much to say.

"You are late," his cousin Mrs. Maxwell said reproachfully, as she shook hands with him. "Punctuality, however, was never one of your virtues, and I feel flattered that you came at all."

"You ought to feel flattered; there is no one else for whom I would do so much."

Mrs. Maxwell had her brother Charles's air of elegance and fashion. When John Graham first went to the West she had been a slender, piquant girl, but she was now a woman of ample proportions, while her prosperous life had stamped her face with an expression of comfortable placidity. As he watched her, he felt that even the folds of her satin gown were instinct with the same irritating, prosaic

self-satisfaction. He and she had been the best of friends when they were young, and he could not become reconciled to her absorption in her society life, which he thought dull and narrow.

There are two courses open to the guest at an afternoon tea,—he can either command fate by seizing upon those persons whom he wishes to see, or he can be subservient to it by giving himself up to the individuals who want to see him. Graham fell a victim to a succession of elderly ladies, who were all glad to meet him again, both for his own sake and his uncle's. They thought him grown old and thin, or not changed at all, according as truth or amiability predominated in their dispositions. Some of them introduced him to their daughters, whom he found it hard to interest; he noticed with grim humor that while he talked to them their eyes wandered to the door, that they might be sure not to miss some one who was better worth while. For the moment he envied his handsome cousin Charles, who was saying graceful nothings with an air of such superhuman wisdom that they might have deceived the very elect. One felt that Charles was born for such occasions as these; and his irreproachable clothes and perfect manners seemed as inevitable a part of him as his light mustache and gray eyes. He was talking to a pretty, fair-haired girl with extreme devotion, which manner however was drawn out in a scarcely slighter degree by every woman of his acquaintance, even if she were old or ugly. Graham did not suspect that they were discussing him.

"Who is that tall man with such an air of hopeless resignation?" Miss Brooks asked.

"He is my cousin, John Graham," Charles replied

in his musical voice. "'Hopeless resignation,' — that is good! He is perfectly indifferent to everything that is worth caring for in society."

"So that is Mr. Graham!" and Greta Brooks glanced at him again with increased interest, for she was familiar with his name. She knew that he had been in the West as a civil-engineer for many years; she had heard of the large fortune that had been unexpectedly left him by his uncle, whose son and heir had died suddenly a year before; she was aware that he had come back to the East determined to stay permanently, and she had heard his praises sung by his devoted aunt, Charles Otis's mother. The facts in his history were so picturesque that it was a disappointment to find the actual John a plain man, with hair that was beginning to turn gray. He had a good figure, she acknowledged, but it was built on a plan better suited to out-of-doors than to drawing-rooms. His entire simplicity and lack of self-consciousness gave him a quiet ease that was a great attraction to many women; the critical Greta, however, thought him rather awkward, and wondered how a man with such a heap of money could contrive to look so unfashionable.

"Well, what do you think of him?" Charles asked.

"I think he is pretty old; I had fancied that he was a great deal younger."

"He is not so old as he looks; he is only thirty-seven."

"I call that very old."

"He is a good fellow, but he is odd. He has n't the slightest notion of the advantages his money might give him; where do you suppose he has chosen to bury himself? — in *Charles Street!*"

Greta Brooks looked up at her companion with a sudden smile that made her prettier than ever. "Is Charles Street such a reprehensible place to live in?" she asked. "From your tone, I should suppose that your cousin had taken up his abode in the Suffolk Jail."

"Charles Street is respectable enough; but he might live *anywhere*, you understand."

A little later, Otis benevolently rescued his cousin from two hopelessly silent women, and presented him to Greta Brooks.

"I have heard a great deal about you from Charles Otis," Miss Brooks said. As she spoke, she looked up into Graham's face with a fearless and at the same time confiding glance from her brown eyes, that said as plainly as words. "Of course you will find me charming, for every one does."

He thought what a pleasant affair life must be to a girl with a pair of brown eyes like these. "I should like to see my portrait as Charles would draw it; it might be instructive," he observed. "What things have you heard about me, Miss Brooks?"

"All sorts of things," she replied discreetly.

"I have heard all sorts of things about you, but I don't believe them."

"You don't believe them?" she said with a little pout; "how horrid of you, — that is, if they were nice things; and Charles would only say nice things about me. I've heard that *you* were a very — well, a very — "

"A very singular individual," put in Graham, "with many curious tastes; for instance, I don't like being jammed against a wall at an afternoon tea. Suppose we improve society, Miss Brooks. Let us

introduce the fashion of out-of-door excursions at receptions in winter; why not, as well as at garden-parties in summer? You and I could take a little stroll as far as Beacon Street."

"If it was n't that my jacket is upstairs, I would go in a minute. How horrified my sister would be! It is stifling in this room; my poor flowers are beginning to wilt." As she spoke, she glanced at the pink roses that made a charming contrast with her gray-blue gown, and then her eyes sought the door.

Graham was painfully conscious that her desire for movement was not connected with a wish for the peaceful enjoyment of his society. She amused him, and he was sorry that he was not young enough to interest her.

"How funny it must be to come back to the East!" Greta said, breaking in upon a description of Texas that he was giving, at her invitation. "Do we do just the kind of things that you used to do when you were young? You must feel exactly like Rip Van Winkle, don't you?"

Before he could reply to these flattering questions, Greta gave a start, and her color deepened. A dark-haired, dark-eyed young man with a foreign type of face had just come in, and the effect of the proximity of this person was magical upon her. She talked with volubility, glancing at Graham every now and then with the look that a pretty woman gives under two conditions; namely, when she wishes to please the man to whom she is talking, or when she is still more anxious to displease another man. Presently the young foreigner went out of the door with unmistakable displeasure. The girl's talk ceased as sud-

denly as it had begun, and she became *distraite*. An old acquaintance took forcible possession of her a moment later, and she was separated from Graham by a surging wave of people. He was sufficiently interested in her and her admirer to take an excursion presently into the library to see whether they had joined each other, for the young fellow had seemed so desperately in earnest that he had felt instant sympathy for him.

Greta was in the farther corner of the room with a cavalier in tow, but he was not her friend of the dark eyes. Her present companion had a short, wiry figure, and red hair and whiskers. His face was of the indefinite kind that one feels one has seen before, in sundry places, and in different grades of society; it was only redeemed from entire insignificance by a pair of kindly blue eyes and an expression of shrewdness and humor.

"I wish you would take me downstairs, Sam," Miss Brooks was saying; "I told you some time ago that I wanted some chocolate." There was an air of hopeless dejection about her that Graham could only explain on the hypothesis that "Sam" was a relation. Graham came to the rescue, and took Miss Brooks to the dining-room, where she introduced him to her sister Emily, and then escaped to join some friends.

It had not occurred to him that there are latent possibilities of enjoyment at an afternoon tea, but at the first sight of Miss Brooks's sister he felt an instant sense of confidence and attraction. She greeted him with unaffected cordiality. "I have heard so much about you from your aunt that I feel as if I knew you already; and in fact — Sugar did you say, and

no cream?" and she paused to give a cup of tea to a young girl. He watched her restful motions with pleasure as she busied herself with the tea-urn; some tall palms formed a background for her pale profile, and he thought how much more attractive her face was than that of her pretty young sister. Everything about her was in harmony, even to the two little amethyst pins that fastened the neck of her black lace dress. He was not usually observant of such trifles, but he thought these stones peculiarly suited to her. He waited with greater satisfaction than he had known for a long time, until she should speak again. At last she said, —

"I was going to say just now that in fact we have met before; we once took a journey together, do you remember?"

"No, I don't," he answered awkwardly enough, after a perplexed pause for retrospection. She impressed him as so simple and straightforward that he felt impelled to speak the plain, unvarnished truth.

"It was a long time ago; I did not expect you to remember. I had been staying with my grandfather in Hilltown, and when I went home you were on the train, and he put me under your care."

"I recollect," said Graham, brightening. "You were quite a child, fourteen perhaps."

"I was older than that."

"And you were very quiet; you hardly opened your lips."

"Because I was so desperately afraid of you."

He laughed. "I can't imagine how any one could be afraid of me."

"You were as good to me as if I had been a much older and wiser person, and I fully appreciated it,

although at the time — I beg your pardon;" and she stopped again to pour out a cup of tea for a long-suffering woman.

Graham soon found himself talking confidentially to his companion. The knowledge that he had seen her before justified, in his opinion, the strong attraction that she had for him; it had evidently been predestined that they should be friends.

"We are quite near neighbors," Emily said at length. "Your cousin tells me that you are in Charles Street; we live on Mt. Vernon Street. I hope —"

"Will you please give me a cup of tea?" said a lady, in a high pitched voice. "Why, if this is n't John Graham! How thin you have grown! I hear that you have come back from the West for good."

"I hope it won't be for anything else."

"It must be delightful to get back to civilization after the West! I fancy they don't have receptions of this kind there. How did you like Galveston? I suppose you went there by the Mississippi; it is convenient that Galveston should be just at its mouth. You must find it so amusing here after the West."

"I do."

Their acquaintance passed on to greet some one else, and Graham turned once more to Emily. "One of my friends goes so far as to put Galveston on the Pacific Ocean," he observed.

She laughed. "Tell me about Galveston," she said.

"Oh, Mr. Graham, I have been looking everywhere for you!" The speaker was a young woman with a

sharp face and preternaturally bright eyes, whose keenness was only partially veiled by her eye-glasses. "I want to attack you again on the subject of the Associated Charities. I know that you have the leisure to be a Visitor, and I can give you *such* an interesting family: the father drinks, the mother is in consumption, one of the boys is a little wild, and there are two girls who ought to be sent into the country. You would have great influence with them, I am sure." Miss Rollins talked rapidly, and let her eyes wander about the room as she spoke; her manner suggested that she was doing a great favor in giving one even a moment of her valuable time.

Graham had already fought more than one battle with her upon this subject; he now found it necessary to be firm.

"I have noticed that Boston is divided into two classes," he said, — "those people who visit in the Associated Charities, and those who are visited by them. If I must enroll myself in one or the other, I will place myself among the visited, for I am so much in need of improvement that I feel no 'call' to influence others. I shall be charmed to receive a Visitor from the Associated Charities at my rooms, which are conveniently situated for such purposes; my cousin Mrs. Maxwell is doing what she can for me, but it is very little."

Miss Rollins laughed; fortunately she had a sense of humor. "You are perfectly incorrigible; but we shall get you yet, I am sure. There is Mrs. Nelson, I must speak to her;" and she departed as abruptly as she had come.

"Your cousin Mrs. Maxwell is my oldest friend,"

Emily said. "We learned to creep upon the same carpet."

"Is it possible —" Is it possible that you are as old as she? he was about to ask, but stopped in time. He thought that an unmarried woman of thirty seemed much younger than a married one. When Graham was interested he was always oblivious of his surroundings, and he talked with his new friend with only a passing sense of the minor interruptions. He was not a man who often spoke of his personal interests; but it was easy to do so now, and he gave her a graphic account of his life in Galveston, and then, urged thereto by her sympathetic questions, a vivid picture of his experiences in the woods.

"How complicated our life must seem after the one which you have left!" she said.

"I can't get used to the multiplicity of engagements, or to the variety of extraordinary ways by which my friends bore themselves under the name of pleasure. An affair of this kind, for instance, is especially mysterious to me. Why do they all come?" and he glanced comprehensively around the room. "Their one object seems to be to get away again as speedily as possible."

"Some of them have come for the same reason that brought you, — a sense of duty."

"I am glad that I came," he said heartily. As he spoke, he was aware that a young man was regarding him with amused interest. It was no other than Greta's friend Sam. He realized for the first time that the room was fast filling, and that his prolonged and absorbed conversation with Miss Emily Brooks might have the aspect of a flirtation to spectators. "Can you tell me who that is?" he asked, looking in

the direction where Sam was standing chatting with a slight, dark-eyed girl.

"Yes; my sister Janet."

"No; I mean the man who is talking to her."

Emily's face instantly brightened. "That is my husband; I should so like to have you know him."

## CHAPTER II.

Yet the day wears,
And door succeeds door.
I try the fresh fortune, —
Range the wide house from the wing to the centre;
Still the same chance, — she goes out as I enter.

ROBERT BROWNING.

AS Graham and Otis were walking across the Public Garden, after Mrs. Maxwell's reception, the latter warmly sounded the praises of Greta Brooks.

"She is just out this winter, — that is, as much out as one can be when one lives in dull Kingshaven. Poor Greta! she gets precious little fun. She is the liveliest of the family, and the most fascinating, although not nearly so handsome as her sister Mary. Mary is really superb. Did you notice her, — the tall girl in the dark red cloth suit and the lynx-fur cape?"

"No; is she anything like her sisters?" Graham spoke indifferently and collectively.

"She is not so charming as Greta by a long shot, for she is nothing of a flirt; I would n't give a brass farthing for a girl who can't flirt. Mary is more like Mrs. Randolph, both in looks and character. They are too serious and conscientious for me, although they are both attractive in their way. I have been in love with the entire family, in my day," he added airily. "You will have a chance to see them all when you go to Kingshaven. I wish I had pre-

sented you to Mary this afternoon. I never saw her look so stunning. She is dark like Emily, and has the same willowy figure, with a brilliant color and fine features in addition."

When a man who is in a position to marry is brought face to face with his ideal, the disappointment caused by the discovery that she is unattainable is certainly mitigated by the knowledge that she has a sister who is as delightful as she is. It was inevitable, in Graham's present frame of mind and with an unusual amount of leisure, that his fancy should occasionally busy itself with Mary Brooks.

Fate took a malicious pleasure in postponing their acquaintance. Twice when Graham had called at Mrs. Randolph's she had told him that Mary was staying with her, but had gone out of the house a few moments before he came in. When he finally did see her, the glimpse was sufficient to turn his desire to know her into something stronger than a passing fancy.

It was late in the afternoon, and he had gone into a little provision-store in his neighborhood to buy fruit; his eyes were arrested by the rich coloring of the red apples and yellow oranges, which showed off to especial advantage in juxtaposition to the large bunches of purple and green grapes, and the dusky red bananas that hung from the wall in great clusters. The dim gaslight gave a semi-obscurity to the place, so that its ugly features were softened, and Graham thought of certain Dutch paintings that he had seen abroad. Into this commonplace background there presently stepped a figure radiant with life and color. He did not notice the details of the dress of the young lady who had so regally completed his picture,

but he received a vivid impression of splendor and magnificence. Something about her made him think of a Russian princess; perhaps it was the deep fur cape that she wore. A rich color glowed in her cheeks, and everything indicated that Nature had made her on a bountiful scale. She was standing so that the light fell on her face and on the thick dark masses of her hair. As he watched her, something in her expression struck him as familiar.

"Will you please send the packages to Mrs. Randolph's, Mt. Vernon St., at once?" he heard her say. He turned to glance at her again with an access of interest. This then was the beautiful Miss Brooks! Suddenly the poor little shop was transformed, and Graham thought of Una, whose face "made a sunshine in the shady place." He had an impulse to speak to her; he wanted to say that he knew her sister, and to ask if he might not have the pleasure of walking home with her, as their ways lay in the same direction. He was unconventional enough to have acted upon this prompting, had he not instinctively felt that she would consider the request a liberty. There was a suggestion of extreme reserve and *hauteur* in the poise of her head and in the outlines of her mouth and chin.

Graham could not resist the temptation of following Miss Brooks at a respectful distance. Her walk expressed his idea of her character; it was firm, decided, and even. He felt sure that he should like her immensely if he ever were so fortunate as to know her well, but equally certain that he should be afraid of her. He protected her, in this distant fashion, until she reached the hospitable portal of the Randolphs' door and disappeared beneath it. He

stood for a moment, wistfully watching the cheerful lights that gleamed from the windows, and fancying the merry party within; then he turned somewhat disconsolately, to walk back to his lonely rooms.

When Graham finally went to Kingshaven, to make his long projected visit to his aunt, his interest in Miss Brooks had been strengthened by several tantalizing meetings. He had finally been presented to her at a whist-party, where however they had played at different tables, so that he had no greater felicity than that of watching the back of her head throughout the evening. Once afterward when he was crossing the Public Garden, he had met her with a little niece on either side, — Margaret Randolph, a demure damsel of nine; and Sally, his especial favorite, a piquant little creature of six, with reddish hair and irresistible blue eyes. As soon as this young person caught sight of her enticing friend, — "my Mr. Graham," as she called him, — she broke away from her aunt, and rushing up to him, flung her arms about him with unrestrained ardor. Miss Brooks reproved Sally for her *abandon;* and as she did so, a smile lighted up the face of Graham's Russian Princess, and transformed her into a benignant being of his own world. He envied the little girls whose hands she held. All her coldness and reserve had vanished now that she was with them.

It was a few weeks after this chance encounter that Graham went to Kingshaven. He had only seen his aunt for a day or two at a time since his return from the West, but now he was to spend an indefinite number of weeks under her friendly roof. She came half-way down the walk to meet him, and put out both her hands with impulsive cordiality.

"My dear boy, I am so glad to see you! It was so good of you to come before Charley, for now we can have a day or two in which to pick up all the dropped stitches. It is such a pleasure to see you, — *such* a pleasure!"

Mrs. Otis's voice was like her son's, and she too had fair hair and gray eyes; all her motions were graceful, and her manner made "all sorts and conditions of men" and women feel at ease at once. John had loved her all his life, and it would have been impossible for him to see any fault in her now. Indeed she belonged to that class of women who are so sympathetic and affectionate that they disarm criticism. She was the only one of his friends who seemed to him wholly unchanged.

The old house where she lived, was outwardly as little altered as she. The inside, however, had been rejuvenated. Graham never entered the two long parlors without disappointment, for the faded green carpet of the mossy pattern that he had loved in his boyhood had been replaced by what he termed "an archipelago" of rugs. It was likewise a grief to him that the landscape-paper, setting forth a series of views in Venice, in dull gray, had given way to a Morris paper of the very latest design.

"Tea is ready," his aunt said. "I always have tea when I am by myself, instead of late dinner which Charley prefers; and I knew that you would not mind. Edith, shake hands with your cousin John," she added, addressing Mrs. Maxwell's little daughter, who was spending a few days with her.

After tea, John and his aunt settled themselves for a long evening of talk, while Edith ensconced herself at her grandmother's writing-desk in the corner.

"You were asking me about the Brookses," said Mrs. Otis. "They moved from Garden Street into our neighborhood soon after you went to the West. They live in that brown house just opposite us, across the Common, — the old King place, you remember. Their mother was a King, and this town was named for an ancestor of theirs, — Henry King, who, many generations ago, found a peaceful haven here, as his descendants have done ever since."

"Mrs. Brooks is not living, I think you said?"

"No; she died when Emily was eighteen and Mary fourteen, — nearly twelve years ago! Mary showed unusual strength of character even as a young girl. When Emily was first engaged, Mary, who was only sixteen, insisted upon taking the care of the household. Even then she proved a wonderful manager, and kept house much more economically and systematically than Emily. She has had the care of the family ever since, and has been a mother to her younger sisters, and the most devoted of daughters."

"I wonder that she has never married," Graham observed.

"She is fastidious, and then her whole mind has been given to the family; Janet has been a great invalid, and Greta is still such a child. Mary would make a most admirable wife, as more than one man has discovered, but what they would do without her at home I don't know; her father is especially dependent upon her. Those girls all adore their father, although what they can find to like in him I can't see. I suppose they inherit this capacity from their mother; I believe Margaret Brooks — Greta is named for her mother — died of nothing more nor less than a broken heart."

John's interest encouraged Mrs. Otis to proceed with her sketch; she was not aware that it arose from his hope that she would in time get back to the present generation.

"It was the strangest match," she said; "no one could understand it. Richard Brooks was a practical country-boy, with a clear head and an inordinate ambition. He came to Boston, where he succeeded in elbowing his way into a good business; and there he saw Margaret King, who was making her cousin Mary MacLinton a visit. The MacLintons, you know, can boast even a more distinguished pedigree than the Kings. Richard Brooks was pleased with Margaret's grace and refinement and flattered by her partiality, for she proceeded to fall in love with his handsome face. He married her because he liked the family connection, rather than from any especial predilection for her. Perhaps I do him injustice; Bessie says that my opinion is worth nothing in the matter of character because my prejudices are so strong. At any rate, they were profoundly unhappy. She craved affection, and he wanted a cheerful, practical wife. It was as sad a tragedy as any I have ever known, and all the sadder because everything on the surface was so prosperous."

Mrs. Otis had let her knitting fall into her lap, and was absorbed for a moment in her thoughts of the past.

"The same thing came near being repeated in Janet's case," she proceeded. "She was engaged to Alfred Warren before she left school. He was a gentlemanly fellow, but he was lighter than oil. He came from that wretched Hilltown where Mr. Brooks had lived as a boy; so did Sam Randolph, by the

way, — that is another extraordinary match, although the Randolphs are happy, and Sam is really an excellent fellow, and very amusing. Mary MacLinton maintains that it takes a more delicate kind of wit to satisfy the best-bred people," she added with a smile. "I always feel as if I were on the verge of vulgarity myself when I am with her. She says too that Sam always sets her teeth on edge, and that *she* prefers men who have had early advantages, — as if we all did not, other things being equal. Alfred was refined enough, but he would have made Janet wretched had he married her."

"What happened to him?" Graham tried to look interested as he asked this question, but he was wondering how he could lead the conversation back to Mary.

"My dear, he died two years ago. It was the only considerate thing that I ever knew of his doing. Forgive my levity, but it is impossible to speak seriously of Alfred Warren. He was a weak and fickle fellow; but he died before Janet had found him out, and I suppose she will go on idolizing him all her life, more 's the pity. She is an impulsive, imaginative girl, without her sister Mary's clear head and bump of caution. Mary could never understand Janet's idealization of her lover, she is herself so clear-sighted and well balanced."

"She made that impression on me," said Graham; "she seems as invigorating as a northwest breeze. I should say that she is thoroughly healthy in body and mind."

"Yes," assented his aunt; "there is not a morbid streak in her. — Why, Edith, my love, what are you doing?"

Graham went over to the writing-desk. "I can show you a much better way of spoiling your aunt's best note-paper," he said.

Edith paused, and became interested at once; she eyed him curiously. "She's my grandmother," she observed. Then she added, "Do you like to do naughty things, such as scribbling over people's nice paper, Cousin Jack?"

"Yes, indeed! I always like to do what is not expected of me. Suppose we put back all this paper, — that will be doing the unexpected surely; and we will keep out this one piece that you have begun upon, and I will draw a much prettier picture than you can."

Edith looked at him furtively; then she climbed down from her chair. "Sit right there," she commanded, "and draw me a nice house, like Uncle Charley."

"My houses won't be as decorative as your Uncle Charley's, because he is an architect; my houses are more simple. Railroads are more in my line."

"Did you use to draw railroads for my cousin Edith when she was a little girl?"

"Yes, sometimes."

"Did you love her very much?"

"Yes."

"Did you cry a great deal when she died?"

"Edith, you must not ask so many questions," remonstrated her grandmother.

"Did you cry a great deal when she died?" she persisted.

"She was my only sister, and so I missed her very much."

Edith had climbed into her cousin's lap, and her

little dark head was close to his blond one. He looked bigger and stronger than ever in comparison with the delicate little creature. Mrs. Otis glanced at the two companions, and thought anew how delightful her nephew was.

"Jack," she said, "you ought to have married. It is a great waste that you have n't half-a-dozen children of your own. I have always wondered why you have never made some woman supremely happy."

John flushed a little. "For one thing, I have always been too hard up," he replied prosaically.

"That reason does not hold now."

"I am too old," he answered, making some absent-minded digs at the paper.

"You have made that turkey have four legs," Edith interposed solemnly.

"You are not too old; what nonsense! My dear, you belong to that class of men who are always charming to the end of the chapter."

Graham was too much accustomed to his aunt's exaggerated praise where her friends were concerned, to feel unduly elated by this remark.

At this moment the portière was pushed back, and Miss Brooks herself came in. Graham felt again the sensation of breeziness and refreshment of which he had spoken. The world became vitally interesting. She had some apple-branches in her hand with clusters of deep pink buds and snowy blossoms sprinkled among the pale green leaves. He had a vivid realization that the spring had come. Mary Brooks was even more beautiful now that she was bareheaded. John noted in what a graceful sweep her dark hair grew about her temples; it was brushed back from her

low forehead, and gathered in a simple but lavish knot behind. Her bright color completed the impression of exuberant health that her well-rounded figure suggested. When she stood near his aunt, he saw that she was above the average height, but he merely felt that other women were not tall enough. Nature had been almost too prodigal, and had given her sufficient attractions to have enriched half-a-dozen of her sex. He had never really seen her eyes before; they were large and thoughtful, like her sister's. In fact, she was a glorified, radiant Emily, with all her charm, and in addition, the divine gift of beauty.

"I have just come back from a drive with the MacLintons," she said, "and Thornton insisted upon despoiling an apple-tree for our benefit. I thought you might like some of the blossoms, Mrs. Otis." She had given Graham a cold little nod. "We did not know that your nephew was here; we thought you would be alone."

Mrs. Otis was enraptured with the apple-blossoms.

"John, will you please get me the large blue bowl on the second shelf in the china-closet?" she asked. "The servants are out," she explained apologetically.

"Let me put the flowers in water," Mary begged.

Graham preceded her into the china-closet, and tried to assist her, but he was so clumsy in comparison with her that he soon gave it up. He watched her as she deftly arranged the apple-blossoms, and thought her hands as expressive as her face. They were large, but they were well-shaped, and looked equal to any emergency.

She let Graham carry the bowl into the parlor. He spilled some water on a rug. He was sorry to

be so awkward; he was not in the habit of thinking whether he were awkward or not.

Miss Brooks almost entirely ignored him during her brief stay. She and Mrs. Otis talked of certain poor families that they were trying to help, and afterwards of people whom he did not know. When she rose to go, he made ready to walk back with her.

"No," she said decisively; "I shall not let you come with me, for it is entirely unnecessary."

Nevertheless he insisted upon seeing her home. It was only a short distance across the Common. The moon was shining mistily through a cloud, showing the houses around the enclosure, and the white church beyond, with its square tower. It was all exactly as he remembered it thirty years ago when he was a little boy.

"I saw you at the 'Merchant of Venice' the other night," Miss Brooks said at last. "Was n't it wonderfully put on the stage?"

"I was disappointed in it. I am afraid I am growing old; I don't enjoy things as I did once."

He felt the same necessity of speaking the absolute truth that he felt when with Mrs. Randolph.

"What a pity!" said Miss Brooks. "To this day I enjoy any play, even a poor one, quite as much as when I was ten years old."

He thought her enthusiasm delightful. He wanted to ask her on the spot if she would not let him share it, as he was sure that he too should care for "any play," if with her. What he said, however, was, "I wish they had not put up an electric light at the corner."

Sounds of laughter and the music of a banjo greeted them as they approached the Brookses' house.

Graham could dimly descry several girls on the piazza, and a smaller proportion of men.

"This is Wagner!" exclaimed a deep voice; and a wonderful Babel of sounds followed.

"That is my brother-in-law, Mr. Randolph," Mary explained with a smile. "His knowledge of Wagner is only exceeded by his skill on the banjo." They were almost at the gate. "I won't ask you to come in, because I know it would be useless, as your aunt is alone."

He had quite forgotten his aunt. He stooped to unfasten the gate, and his hand accidentally touched Mary's whereupon he had the unseemly desire to seize it and carry it to his lips. He merely bowed gravely, and wished her good-evening.

"I hope you will come over some time when my father is at home," she said, "for he would like so much to see you."

Graham wished that he were ten years younger, and as handsome as Charles Otis.

## CHAPTER III.

When a woman's charm has won half the battle, her character is an advancing standard.

GEORGE MEREDITH.

WHEN Graham first crossed the threshold of the Brookses' house, it was with a half-defined feeling that he was entering upon a new and interesting chapter of his life. He was by no means sure that he was to be one of the chief actors, for his past had not been so successful as to inspire him with much faith in his future. He had become habituated to looking at life from the point of view of an outsider.

Charles and John were welcomed by Greta, who was taking a music-lesson. She made a pretty *moue* of regret.

"It is too bad; but I must have a little more of this hateful lesson first, and by the time it is over Mary will have come back, and we will play tennis. Do you know Mr. Reinhart, Mr. Graham?"

Graham looked at her music-teacher with interest; he was no other than her dark-eyed admirer of the afternoon tea.

"You may like to play tennis until Mary and I are ready," she added; "or perhaps you would rather stay on the piazza."

They preferred to wait on the piazza, which ran the length of the two parlors, with glass doors opening on it from either room.

It was a delicious afternoon. The maples on the Common were nearly in full leaf, while the later elms were enveloped in a delicate green mist. An east wind, softened by the distance which it had travelled since leaving the sea, had gathered something of the fragrance of the apple-blossoms in the Brookses' garden. It expressed to the sense of smell what the faint colors showed to the eye, while the song of robins and bluebirds completed the impression to the ear. Every sense was penetrated with the beauty of the spring.

The sound of music floated out to Graham and Otis, and also occasional comments in Greta's high-pitched voice.

"I have n't practised that thing; you know I told you that I perfectly hated it."

"I wish I could make everything pleasant for you always, and only give you what you like; but if you really wish to study music—" began Reinhart.

"But I don't; it is an idea of Mary's. All I care for is to be able to play my accompaniments; and I don't see that these horrid exercises will help me one bit."

Greta leaned forward a little and gave her teacher a glance that seemed most childlike. "Mr. Reinhart, I shall never make anything of a musician! I never could learn to play like—like Fraulein Aus der Ohe, if I were to give hours and hours, for years and years, to it."

"No," he said gravely, "that would not be possible; but you could play very charmingly, and give your friends great pleasure, if you would take the pains."

"I don't care to play tolerably; I don't want to do a thing unless I can really excel in it," she replied

loftily. "And so," she added beseechingly, "as all I want is to play accompaniments, why can't you give me only attractive things, and leave out all those detestable little exercises to improve my touch? I think it is nice enough now;" and she looked down at her pretty hands complacently. "Mr. Reinhart, let us make a compromise; if you will promise not to give me any more arpeggios and scales and exercises, I will promise to do my practising faithfully every day."

"Miss Greta —" But Reinhart lowered his voice, and the audience could not hear his reply.

Charles, who had grown tired of Greta's stumbling playing, proposed to John that they should adjourn to the tennis-court. The way thither led through a delightful old-fashioned garden, with beds that would be brilliant with roses and hollyhocks later in the season, and prim walks at right angles with one another bordered with box. Graham was very fond of these relics of the taste of a former generation, in which Kingshaven abounded, and infinitely preferred the old way to the modern fashion of sprinkling flower-beds about promiscuously on lawns.

After a time Greta joined them. Charles rapidly took in every detail of her appearance, from the crown of her blond head to the tip of her pointed shoe. These comprehensive glances were sometimes most embarrassing to her. She knew that he noticed every defect. If her dress were faded, he saw it; if it were darned at the elbow or if it needed a new braid, she was sure that he divined that also. To-day, however, she held herself erect, in the proud consciousness that her gown was new and fitted perfectly.

"Your dress is very pretty," said Charles, after his survey was over; "that pale shade of blue is particularly becoming to you."

Greta tried not to show that this praise pleased her, but to look as if dress were a matter of entire indifference to her. "Let's talk about something more interesting," she said. She was longing to ask Charles's advice about an India silk, but was afraid of John Graham.

"Are there any subjects more interesting than dress?" Charles asked languidly.

"Yes; quantities of them."

"Music, for instance?"

"You provoking thing! I should like to pelt you with apple-blossoms." As she spoke, she broke off a branch and fastened it into her gown.

"Give me a pelting," Charles begged; "I should like it extremely."

"No, you would n't; you would think it very unladylike."

"Oh, no; it would be impossible for me to think you anything but charming, no matter what you did."

"Mr. Graham," said Greta, "what shall I do to him? Does he behave in this way when he is with you?"

"Yes," Graham replied gravely; "he is always paying me the prettiest compliments from morning until night."

"By the way," Charles observed, "we have not settled upon our interesting topic of conversation; suppose we discuss Free Trade and the Tariff? What are your views on that subject, Greta?"

"I believe in Free Trade," she announced unhesitatingly.

"Oh, you do," said Charles, much amused; "then you dare to differ from your father! May I ask the reason for your views?"

"I should be sorry to bore Mr. Graham with a long disquisition on Free Trade," she said with mock seriousness; then she began to laugh softly: "Do you know, Mr. Reinhart really thought that I believed that perhaps — possibly — I could learn to play like Fraulein Aus der Ohe, if I gave up my life to it? He is so amusing without meaning it."

"You are a very cruel young woman. Do you laugh at us all as soon as we are well out of your sight?" Charles demanded.

"Oh, no," Greta replied, giving him one of her most flattering glances; then she changed her tones and imitated his soft way of speaking, "It would be impossible for me to find you anything but charming, whatever you did."

At this point Miss Brooks came out of the house and joined them. The character of the talk instantly changed. Greta grew dignified at once, and Charles offered Mary his seat with suave politeness.

"I can't play tennis," Greta said, "because I have on this dress. Mary dear, will you come into the house one minute? I want to consult you about something. Mr. Reinhart is coming to tea," she began indifferently, as soon as they were out of hearing.

"Greta Brooks," and Mary stopped suddenly, "you ought not to have asked him without consulting me; it was underhanded of you, it was n't fair."

"I have told you fully two hours before tea," said Greta, assuming an air of virtue. "I might have waited and sprung him on you, but I thought you

would rather know. I will do your errands, if you want to get extra things."

"That is not the difficulty; you know how careful I have been not to encourage Mr. Reinhart."

"You often ask Charles Otis to stay to tea; *I* don't think you ought to encourage *him*. Of course I can tell Mr. Reinhart, when he comes, that I found it was not convenient to have him stay," Greta proceeded meditatively.

"No," said Mary, in a resigned tone, "he will have to stay. I wish, Greta, that you ever were willing to acknowledge that you are in the wrong."

Greta laughed, and put her cheek against her sister's in a caressing fashion.

"Poor old Mary, it is dreadfully hard for you to have a sister 'who cannot help being charming, no matter what she does'!" The last part of the sentence was spoken in imitation of Charles. "I will be quite snubby to Mr. Reinhart, if you like, dear; I have decided to set my cap for Mr. Graham," she continued gayly. "To be sure, he is not all my young fancy once painted; he is old enough to be my father, rather gray, and a trifle bald; but he is rich, Mary, and that makes up for everything."

"I wish you would not joke about such things. Sam has demoralized you."

They went back to the tennis-court; and Mary and Graham played a set, while Greta and Charles lazily watched them. Mary played well, and was a picturesque figure in her dark blue tennis-dress with the red belt and the little red cap.

Graham feared that there was never to be much of the *tête-à-tête* element in his intercourse with Miss Brooks. In the first place, Janet appeared; she was

smaller and slighter than Mary and Greta, but pretty in an unobtrusive fashion, although this fact never impressed one when she was with her handsome sisters; then Mr. Brooks strolled out to see how the games were going, and finally several neighbors arrived upon the scene.

After Graham and his cousin had taken their departure, Greta tried unsuccessfully to make Mary give her opinion of their new acquaintance.

"My dear, I have had perhaps ten minutes' talk with him, and that is not a sufficient length of time in which to form an opinion."

"Ten minutes seem to have been enough for him; it is evident that he is all broken up by you. How nice and romantic it must be to have a plain elderly man fall in love with one at first sight!" she mused.

Greta was not alone in her surmises concerning John Graham. At the end of a fortnight every one in Kingshaven was sure that he wanted to marry Miss Brooks. Her friends were not equally certain what her sentiments might be, but it was universally admitted that she could not make a more suitable match.

Notwithstanding John's daily opportunities for seeing Mary, he had as yet nothing of that sense of intimacy with her which he had felt at once with her sister Emily. This reserve, however, he told himself, was one of her chief attractions. If her mere superficial side were so charming, what must she not be when one knew her well enough to get below the surface? The chief obstacle to their better acquaintance lay in the fact that he had so little opportunity to see her alone. She was always surrounded by an

invincible guard of relations, — sisters, cousins, and aunts, — to say nothing of a father, who considered it his prerogative to engage her admirers in fiery political discussions or else in a more amicable battle over the whist-table.

When the fortnight was over, John was unexpectedly confronted with a telegram summoning him to the West. All at once he realized that in quitting Kingshaven he was leaving behind him what was best worth having in life. It was evening when the telegram came, and he was to start on his journey the following day. He looked across the Common at the old brown house. There was a light in the upper right-hand window. He wondered if that were her room. Did she know how she had changed his world?

He half hoped that he should not see her alone when he went to bid her good-by, lest he could not help saying more than would be wise, for he knew that the time was not yet ripe for speech. He need not have feared on the score of solitude. Greta was on the piazza, and also Thornton MacLinton (a nineteen-year-old cousin of the Brookses) and Miss Barrows, a near neighbor. They were all sorry that Graham was going to leave Kingshaven, but brightened when they learned that it was only for a fortnight.

When he bade Mary good-by, he said, "And you — will you too be a little glad to see me when I come back?"

She was somewhat apart from the others, who were laughing and chatting and could not hear him. She looked up and met his glance with frank, untroubled eyes.

"Of course I shall be glad to see you; we shall all miss you. I don't know what Papa will do without his daily battle over the Tariff."

While he was away, Graham had an acute attack of homesickness. Every morning he awoke with a dreary sense that something was wrong. He tried to throw off his despondency by hard work. This depression was nothing new, but an old foe with which he had struggled, at intervals, throughout his life. Now, however, his state of mind seemed unendurable. He dared not think what the future would be, if bereft of the companionship which had so cheered him of late.

On his way home he stayed for a couple of days in New York with his friend George Hubbard. Hubbard was an artist who was living in Bohemia with his young wife on nothing a year, to the unbounded satisfaction of both of them. A few months ago when he had heard his friend's raptures, John had smiled in a superior fashion, wondering why so clever a man had been captivated by a young woman with nothing to recommend her but her pink cheeks and a sweet disposition. He still was surprised that this especial little girl had wrought such a change in his friend's life; but he no longer felt like an outsider, but in full sympathy with his joy.

George was bubbling over with fun and high spirits, and assured Graham that he could have no idea of the meaning of the word "happiness" until he had found some sweet little girl who would think him the most adorable being in the world. At these words the picture of a different person came into John's mind, and at intervals during the evening a question presented itself to him for solution; namely, if life is so delightful

when shared with an ignorant little country-girl, who has no sympathy with the intellectual part of one's nature, what would it be in the companionship of a thoughtful, intelligent woman? He had occasional hints of a deeper feeling than he had yet known, and was almost frightened by the glimpses his fancy showed him of the happiness that might be in store for him. He knew only too well that Miss Brooks did not care for him now, but he could not help hoping much, from the effect of time and devotion.

The Hubbards lived in a tiny flat at the top of a high apartment-house, from whence they had an extensive view of roofs and chimneys, while they looked down upon the elevated railroad, which was far enough below them to seem on solid ground. Graham was fascinated both by their outlook and their *ménage*.

"I want to show you all our pretty things, Mr. Graham," Mrs. Hubbard said. She had confiding manners, and a childlike certainty that because her husband's friend was so good, he must be deeply interested in all her small concerns. She showed him her wedding presents, and explained to him at length the ingenious contrivances by which she had made a small amount of money go a long way.

"What we should have done without you, Mr. Graham, I am sure I don't know," she added gratefully; "your wedding present has almost wholly furnished our apartment, and then it is such a thing for George to have your order for pictures."

As George was one of John's oldest friends, it was a matter of course that he should do what he could for him, and this gushing expression of gratitude was distasteful.

"Everybody has been so kind," she continued; "I don't think any man ever had so many friends as George."

"No one deserves them better."

"He *is* good;" and she gave a deep sigh of satisfaction. "Then he is so clever, I often wonder what made him choose such a stupid little thing as I am."

When their tour of the apartment was at an end, they returned to the studio where Mr. Hubbard was at work. It was a pleasant room, somewhat bare as to furniture, but sumptuous as to pictures and draperies. Mrs. Hubbard brought out a box of brilliantly hued scraps of silk, and unfolded a complicated piece of work.

"I am making a crazy table-cloth," she explained calmly. "George says it is very inartistic; but I tell him that when I get on a deep black velvet border around the edge, embroidered with daisies, and put on a ball fringe for a finish, he will think it is lovely. Do you like it?" she inquired anxiously.

"It is very pretty," Graham replied. He did not feel impelled to speak the "plain unvarnished truth" when with this woman.

"If you have any old neckties, I wish you would save them for me," she went on, "they work in so well. George, did you take in that Mr. Graham thinks my table-cloth is a beauty?"

George stopped painting for a moment, and turned to look at his wife with some exclamation on his lips. She was so pretty, however, as she glanced up brightly, that no one could have had the heart to gainsay her. Graham forgave her even her heavy, tightly frizzed bang. Before his visit was over, it ceased to trouble him that she said "you was" and

called him "Sir." He felt that he had been a snob ever to have let such small things annoy him. He had knocked about the world enough to like men irrespective of their grammar, but he was more fastidious concerning women.

On the last evening of Graham's stay they were once more in the studio. He and Mrs. Hubbard were old friends by this time; for in spite of her slender knowledge of the world, she had innate refinement and tact, and knew instinctively how to make her guest feel at home.

"Boston has n't put its unmistakable stamp on you yet, Jack," Hubbard said. "You are still willing to converse pleasantly with 'the likes' of us."

"Boston is altogether too excessive for me; I shall be thankful to come to New York next winter. I don't regret that I tried Boston," he added, as a vision of Miss Brooks rose before him.

"I had supposed that you would go the way of all worldlings and millionnaires," mused George, — "that you would have already married a society wife, set up a large establishment, and taken to giving elaborate dinners, teas, receptions, etc."

"Heaven forbid!" ejaculated Graham. "If you could see my rooms on Charles Street, under the supervision of my old nurse Mrs. Willett, you would have no fears for me."

"My dear fellow, a sight of your coat alone was enough to reassure me."

"If you marry," George said a few moments later, "be sure you choose a wife who sympathizes with you on the subject of table-cloths. What I have suffered in the disillusion of my ideal, I will leave you to imagine. I had hoped for complete sympathy

in Art, and I have a wife who makes crazy table-cloths."

"Mr. Graham," Mrs. Hubbard said with a merry laugh, "if you are *very* good, perhaps I will send you my table-cloth when it is finished, since *you* appreciate it."

## CHAPTER IV.

To him there was a special charm in her vestal temper; it might be less yielding, less fond, but it must be of purer and richer tone. A nature so sufficient for itself must have great reserve of treasure to impart. There would indeed be force and breadth and depth in such companionship. . . . There was vision in her faculty, guidance in her strength, and would there not be rapture in her tenderness?

MANUELA PARÉDES
(*No Name Series*).

GRAHAM'S friendship with the Randolphs was growing apace. He had formed the habit of dropping in to dine with them rather often. He felt thoroughly at home in the unconventional atmosphere of their house. The day after his return from New York he went to see them. He found Mrs. Randolph in a state of great excitement.

"Mr. Graham," she said, "I have just discovered that Sally and Molly have wandered off together somewhere. There is no telling when they left the house. I had to be away all the afternoon, and the nursery-maid slipped out and left them to their own devices, and when she came back they were not here."

Graham comforted her as best he could, and said that he would instantly go in search of them.

"Thank you; I feel so helpless without Sam! He is in Philadelphia. I can't help being worried, for they are such babies; and if they should — if — if anything should happen while Sam is away, I could never forgive myself."

As Graham was about to leave the house, Mary Brooks came in. Her sister turned to her as if she had found a tower of strength.

"We shall find them very soon, Emily," Mary said, with cheerful self-reliance; "you must not come with us, because they may turn up here at any moment. Don't worry; worrying never does any good."

Mary was evidently one of those persons to whom action is necessary in a crisis, and she had a distinct conception of what she wished to do. She peremptorily negatived Graham's suggestion that he should get a carriage for her, and a little later he found himself walking through the narrow Boston streets by her side. He could not help a feeling of exhilaration, grave as their errand was. To be alone with her, and to have her in a measure dependent upon him, was a new sensation. She was preoccupied and silent. He glanced at her from time to time, and thought, as if it were a fresh discovery, how beautiful she was.

At Mary's suggestion, they went first to the Police Station on Joy Street. While they were interviewing a policeman, they heard a child wailing piteously in a farther room. She was brought out for their inspection, and proved to be a begrimed little thing with a torn dress, and a look of abject poverty and helplessness that melted Graham's heart. He tried to comfort her after his man-fashion. Mary was too bent upon the recovery of her nieces to have any attention to spare for this waif.

"The little girls for whom I am looking are very different," she said, shrinking from the touch of the grimy stranger, who was making a dive for the silver trimming on her pale gray dress. She gave the man

a minute description of the children, and then she and Graham went into the streets once more. They inquired at different points whether anything had been seen of two blue-eyed, curly-haired little girls, wearing blue gingham dresses and broad-brimmed hats. Among other places they went to the provision-store where Emily usually bought her fruit.

"It was here that I saw you first," Graham said, as they turned away from the little shop.

"When?" she asked in surprise.

"Late one afternoon last winter. I knew you from your resemblance to your sister. I wanted to offer to walk back with you, but I did not dare. Would you have been offended with me if I had?"

She gave him the direct glance that he always liked. Her truthfulness was one of the things that he cared for most in her.

"I don't think so; I suppose I should have thought it a little unusual," she added.

He could with difficulty refrain from telling her then and there how strong had been the impression that the first sight of her had produced upon him. He wondered that she could help divining how he felt; that she did not know was but an added proof of her rare unconsciousness.

As their unavailing search continued, Mary's face grew grave. "We must find the children before dark," she said. "I never worry, on principle, but I cannot bear to have my sister disturbed."

Just then there was a sudden rush and confusion behind them, and shouts of "Look out! Get out of the way!" A runaway horse was galloping down Charles Street, and scattering the frightened wayfarers to the right and left. Graham had a moment

of horrible suspense. Mary did not see their approaching danger; he had just time to seize her and drag her a little to one side. The horse dashed past them, and came so near that they barely escaped being knocked down.

Mary was pale, but she did not lose her self-control. "That was a narrow escape," she said coolly. Then something occurred to her. "Do you suppose it is possible that the children were among those people over there?" she asked, pointing in the direction of a group of men and women in the distance.

"No, certainly not; but perhaps I had better set your mind at rest by making sure."

The men had already moved away when they reached the spot, but some of the women still lingered to talk over the affair. It was evident from their grave faces that there had been an accident.

"What has happened?" Mary inquired.

"A little girl was knocked down by the horse, miss," one of the women replied.

Every vestige of color left Mary's face at these words. "How old a child?" she asked faintly.

"Well, I should say somewheres around four or five, possibly six."

"What did she have on?"

"I don't rightly recollect, miss, — something blue, I think. Some bones was broke, and so they carried her to the hospital in that carriage; they warn't sure that she would live."

Mary swayed back and forth giddily. John put out his hand, caught her, and held her fast. "I will go to the hospital," he said; "there is only one chance in a hundred that it is one of the little girls.

You must not try to go; you must come in here and rest. Mrs. Willett, my housekeeper, will take care of you." They were almost opposite his rooms.

"No," she insisted, breaking away from him, "I must go."

"You must not; you are not equal to it."

"I must, I will go."

"You must come in here and rest." They were in front of his house now.

"I am going to the hospital."

He felt helpless before her strong will. "It will be too much for you." He put his latch-key into the door. "You had much better wait here." He held the door open invitingly.

"No, I prefer to go to the hospital."

"Mr. Graham," — and Mrs. Willett appeared in the background, placid and comfortable as usual, — "there is two little girls waiting for you in your parlor, — the little girls who come with Edith Maxwell and her ma the other day."

John never forgot the radiance of Mary's face. "Where are they?" she asked breathlessly. She darted past him, and went swiftly up the stairs to the front room. He followed a moment later. He was in time to see her bending over the children, who were asleep on his faded green sofa. Sally had thrown one of her arms protectingly about Molly. Their faces were flushed, and their curly red locks were in a dishevelled tangle. Mary stooped and kissed them both, in the quick, passionate way of one who seldom permits herself any show of feeling.

When John at last ventured to enter, she was as composed as ever. She had wakened the children, who were looking about them in sleepy bewilder-

ment. Molly had her head in her aunt's lap. Mary was smoothing the little girl's disordered hair.

Sally was the first to recover herself. "Please, my Mr. Graham," she entreated, "will you give us some bananas and some candy, the way you did that other time; and some make-believe tea in the funny little teacups?"

"Tea, tea!" echoed Molly.

"I should be glad to give you all I possess." Graham spoke with fervent heartiness.

Mary meanwhile was striving to impress upon her nieces a realizing sense of their guilt.

"Tea, tea!" Molly reiterated serenely.

"I cannot give you anything," Graham said, with a melancholy shake of the head, "because I am afraid of your aunt; she does n't like people unless they are very, very good. I never hope to reach her high standard; but if I were to aid and abet you now, I should lose what small portion of her esteem I possess."

Sally looked at Graham with perplexity in her wide-open blue eyes.

"Which means, being translated into plain English, that you have both been very naughty little girls," Mary said. "This is why you cannot have any fruit or tea; we must go straight back to poor frightened mamma."

Their mother was eagerly watching for them at the front window. She insisted that Graham should come in and stay to dinner. While she was occupied with the children, he and Mary had a few moments alone. He was absorbed in a hundred speculations. He wondered, among other things, if it would ever be his fate to ruffle Mary's imperturbable serenity,

which he had discovered to be only a surface calm. What would it be to awaken a nature like hers, to win such a look as she had given the children half an hour ago? He was aware, at last, that he had let a long silence fall between them. Mary was breaking it; she was asking him if he had seen Daly's Company.

"No," he said; "yes — I beg your pardon, yes, I saw them the other night."

He knew that his absent-minded ways annoyed her, and he was afraid that she would be still more displeased could she know the subject of his meditations. "Will you go with me to the theatre some night while they are here?" he asked.

"Yes, I should like it of all things."

He could scarcely believe the evidence of his senses.

"I suppose your aunt will go too?" she added.

"My aunt? I think not; she is not fond of midnight expeditions."

"I could not go alone with you," Mary explained with her usual frankness, "because that is not the custom in Kingshaven. In the East — "

"I know all about the Eastern reverence for chaperones," he broke in, "but I fancied that I was quite old enough to chaperone anybody. I thought that was one of the advantages in having attained middle life," he continued boldly. "There are very few of them; have you the heart to deny me this one?"

"It would be impossible for me to go with you alone," she repeated. "Perhaps we might get up a party," she added thoughtfully.

"A party!" Graham exclaimed, with a certain

fierceness that seemed disproportioned to the cause, — "a party! Is there anything under heaven that two people can do by themselves in this part of the world? In all the weeks that I have known you I have never yet had the least chance of seeing you by yourself, never once. How am I ever to know you any better if you are always to be swamped in a crowd of relations? I beg your pardon, I have no right to find fault in this way. The East has many advantages, I am willing to admit, but you never have time here for friendships."

"I have at least a dozen intimate friends who would tell you that you are mistaken."

"A dozen? I dare say; you have a superfluity of everything, even of friends."

"You are very illogical and unreasonable."

"If I am illogical and unreasonable, do you know why it is?" He had risen and stood confronting her.

Emily's entrance saved her from the necessity of a reply.

## CHAPTER V.

One rose, but one, by those fair fingers cull'd.
ALFRED TENNYSON.

A FEW days later, Graham was again in Kingshaven, and one afternoon he went by appointment to play tennis with Mary Brooks. The sky looked threatening when he started, and a sharp shower soon drove them into the house. They found Janet in the parlor, amusing Sally Randolph and Edith Maxwell. With the fickleness of her sex, Sally instantly deserted her ally, and seized upon "her Mr. Graham." Edith insisted upon climbing into his lap, and Sally speedily followed her example.

"Do draw us a house, please, Cousin Jack," Edith begged, "with nice large rooms in it. I don't want any closets," she added gravely, "because I shall never wish to have my children shut up in them; but I want a pantry, please, full of lots of nice things to eat."

"Bananas and candy, and lovely tea in little teacups," suggested Sally.

John began to draw a plan, and Mary aided the architect. "You will want a square hall to begin with, and an open fireplace," she said.

"Do you care about a square hall, Miss Randolph and Miss Maxwell?" John asked, consulting his clients deferentially.

"I don't care what sort of a hall I have," Edith answered, "but I want a staircase with the kind of balusters that are easy to slide down, — not too many corners; I like one long slide best."

"Will you have the architraves of your house plain or moulded, and will you have it back-plastered or use Beaver-brand paper?"

"I don't know," said Edith, doubtfully.

"I want Beaver-band paper, and arc–arc —"

"Architraves," suggested Graham.

"Architraves that are not mouldy," said Sally, who was never at a loss for an opinion.

"We 'll call it your house, Cousin Jack," Edith said. "You make it the way you like."

"In the first place, I shall have open fireplaces all over it. In the second place, there will be no north side, but a flood of sunshine all day long. The rooms will be square and simple, with no jogs nor Queen Anne corners."

"Oh, Mr. Graham, you will want some corners, or your house will be very uninteresting;" and Mary found some paper and a pencil, and proceeded in a workmanlike manner to draw her idea of a house, which differed in many respects from his.

"You ought to be an architect," he said, watching her with interest.

"I hope you will build your house very soon, Mr. Graham," Janet observed, pausing on her way out of the room to look at the rival plans, "for it sounds fascinating. Sun and fireplaces in every room! I can think of nothing more ideal. Please put it in some region more accessible than Spain."

"Where shall I build it?" he asked, turning to the children.

"Right on the Public Garden in Boston would be a nice place," Sally said tranquilly, — "on the edge of the little pond, — and then we could go out in those dear boats every day."

"Sally and I will live with you when your house is finished, Cousin Jack," Edith stated.

"Thank you."

"And Aunt Mary will come and take care of us all," added Sally. "Would n't you like that, Mr. Graham?"

"There is nothing in this world that I should like so much."

Something in his voice and manner sent the color in a vivid flame to Mary's cheeks.

At this juncture the children caught sight of some outside attraction and rushed off to inspect it. Mary's averted face and glowing color filled John with an unreasonable hope.

"Miss Brooks," he said, "I did not mean to say this now, — I do not deserve it, I scarcely dare hope for it; but — but — you have it in your power to make me inexpressibly happy." There was a humble tone of entreaty in his voice which could hardly fail to impress his hearer. She looked down.

"I have known you so short a time," she began.

"Does it seem a short time to you?" he asked; "it seems a whole lifetime to me."

She was playing with her pencil, standing it first on its point and then on its base, as if this were the outward expression of her state of mind.

"I have perfect confidence in you," she said at last, looking at him with her beautiful serious eyes. He caught her hand; she drew it away, and resumed her occupation with the pencil. "I like

you," she said slowly, and it seemed as if the admission were wrung from her against her will. "I am not a romantic person, but I do like you very much; and I think — yes, I feel sure that we could be happy together."

The next morning Graham started for the Brookses at as early an hour as he dared. The boys were playing ball on the Common. He felt as if they must all know what had happened. He had never thought that such a wonderful thing could come into his life. He almost ran into Janet, who was coming out of the gate. She hesitated, and then looked up at him shyly. "I am so glad for you," she said impulsively; "there is no one like her, and you can't imagine half what she is, because you have n't known her always as we have." Before he had time to reply, she flitted past him, as if ashamed of her sudden outburst.

John found Mary in the garden gathering roses.

"Good-morning," she said, smiling brightly at him. "You must excuse me if I go on with my work; I want to get through before the sun is too high."

As he watched her, he felt as if he had dreamed the scene of the previous afternoon, she was so self-possessed.

"I am always busy in the morning;" and she stooped to cut a spray of white roses.

"I know it," he returned ruefully. "I knew that I had come too early, but you don't know how late it seems to me. You should be thankful that I did not appear at breakfast-time," he added, trying to speak lightly.

During his wakeful but happy night he had

thought of many things that he wanted to say to her, but it seemed impossible to speak of them now. They talked on indifferent subjects, and he followed her from one bush to another with appealing eyes. At last she reached a china rose which bore such a generous supply of pink blossoms that he felt sure that one could be spared for him. They were in every stage of development, from little buds just showing a trace of pink, to half-open ones wet with dew, and blossoms ready to scatter their petals. This rosebush was so bountiful in its completeness that it cast all the others into the shade. He was conscious that Mary's beauty had the same effect upon him, when he compared it with that of other women; and yet he said to himself that it was only a secondary matter, and what he cared for least. Her pink gown brushed against the roses as she gathered them; it matched them in color. He would hardly have been surprised to find that it was also of the same texture.

"May I have a rose?" he asked humbly.

"Certainly, as many as you like," she replied, handing him the scissors.

"I did not mean that," he said, a most unusual confusion seizing him; "I meant that I would like—will you give me one?" He was not only aware of his own want of self-possession, but also keenly alive to the fact that no touch of his awkwardness was lost upon his companion. The basket of roses was suspended upon her arm, but she did not offer to give him one.

"Please don't think it necessary to be sentimental," she entreated. "I like you so much better when you are your natural self. You need not feel obliged

to treat me any differently on account of what has happened," she continued, as she carefully selected half-a-dozen of the pink roses that he liked, and snipped off the thorns. "It will be so much more comfortable to go on as usual. An engagement that is worth anything seems to me the natural development of a friendship."

He thought her more adorable than ever. It would have been impossible to have stayed on the plane where he had been for the last few weeks, and her tranquil ways were restful to him. He wondered if she were as much stirred beneath the surface as he was, and then he remembered that he must seem equally composed to her; there were difficulties attending the engagement of two unusually reserved persons.

"If you really care for these roses," she said as they approached the piazza, "I shall be glad to give them to you." An unwonted look of shyness and softness came into her face.

He took them eagerly. "I can't tell you how grateful I am for anything that you can give me. If you only knew how lonely my life has been, you would understand how much your friendship is to me."

"It won't be lonely any more," she said gently. "It is impossible to be lonely if you have any connection with this household, for there are so many of us."

## CHAPTER VI.

Think naught a trifle, though it small appear.
Small sands the mountains, moments make the year;
And trifles, life.

EDWARD YOUNG.

IF Graham did not at once find all the happiness in his engagement that he anticipated, he told himself that he had more than he deserved. This was the opinion of others also, judging by the letters of congratulation that poured in upon Mary. According to these documents, there never was such a fortunate man as John Graham. It was an accepted fact that he could not be half good enough for Mary Brooks, and her friends all hoped that he knew what a treasure he had won. He would have had a better chance to realize it, poor fellow! if he could have seen a little more of her. He used to imagine, in the simplicity of his heart, that when two people were engaged, nothing stood in the way of their great intimacy and dependence upon each other; but he was speedily undeceived. He had agreed with Mary that it was better to let their friends know of their engagement at once; but his views would have altered, had he foreseen the penalty of this immediate publicity.

"On what day had our engagement better come out?" Mary had asked upon one of the rare occasions when they were alone together.

"What day?" he repeated stupidly. "I thought we had decided that the sooner people know of it the better."

"Yes, of course; but we must settle upon the exact day before we write to our friends. I shall have to decide when I shall be at home."

"When you will be at home?" Graham asked, more and more mystified.

"Yes. Don't you know that in this part of the world it is the custom for an engagement to come out upon an appointed day? Then the fortunate or unfortunate victim has to stay at home, dressed in her best gown, to receive the congratulations of her friends; and everybody sends flowers. The house will be flooded with them."

"It is a stupid custom!" broke in Graham; "we will defy it. We will tell people gradually, and let them bring their flowers singly, and not in herds."

Mary shook her head.

"You don't want to see a crowd of acquaintances for whom you care nothing!"

Mary was silent.

"And you certainly can't want an inundation of flowers, when there are more in the garden than you know what to do with!"

"There is no use in getting excited," Mary said soothingly. "We must do as others do; there is always a reason underlying our social customs, and it is easier in the end to conform to them. I shall have to give up the week to writing notes and receiving callers and arranging flowers, and then it will be over, and we shall be left to ourselves; whereas, according to your plan, we should have a succession

of flowers and notes and visitors all summer, don't you see?"

"I see that the thing may be necessary; but it would be an immense satisfaction to me if you would admit that it is a confounded bore."

"Is n't that rather a strong way of putting it?"

"No; it would give me great pleasure to put it much more strongly. You will get entirely worn out. You don't mean to say that you like all this red tape?" he demanded, as a change in her expression struck him.

Mary was too honest to equivocate. "Yes," she said, giving him the frank, straightforward glance from her beautiful eyes that always charmed him; "if a thing is to be done, I believe in doing it in the best way. Our engagement can come out awkwardly or in the usual way; for my part, I can't help taking pleasure in doing a thing well."

"Everything that you do is always done well," said Graham, who felt like a blundering idiot.

Thus it happened that Miss Brooks was at home on certain afternoons to receive the congratulations of her relatives and friends. Kingshaven sent flowers in such profusion that Janet and Greta were busy arranging them from morning until night; in fact, they used up every vase and pitcher in the house before the evening of the first day of the inundation, as Graham had termed it. On the second day they were reduced to the finger-bowls; and after having exhausted these, they borrowed the entire wealth of Mrs. Otis's china-closet. Graham said he thought it would be an appropriate custom to send vases and jugs at the time of an engagement.

The flowers and the congratulatory notes and calls

were but the beginning of the story. Mary had foretold that she and John would be left to quiet enjoyment at the end of a week; but on the contrary, after this time had passed, he saw less of her than ever. Unfortunately this desire for her society was not peculiar to himself, but was shared by the entire population of Kingshaven, and likewise by her relatives who had taken their departure for the sea-side or the country. The latter were united in a consuming curiosity to see for themselves whether John Graham was half good enough for her.

"You will have a long time with me on Saturday," Mary had said to John, after some vain efforts on his part to detach her from a necessary duty. "You remember that Cousin Mary MacLinton has asked us to spend Sunday with her at Beverly. You will enjoy that, for Cousin Mary is delightful, and she has the most fascinating house."

"What do I care about her fascinating house!" John broke out. "I wish that all your relations and their fascinating houses were in Sahara, or else that you and I could cut adrift from the whole concern, and go to a wilderness where afternoon teas and commerce and whist were never heard of. I wish that we could be married next week, and go to the Adirondacks for the rest of the summer. I wish—"

"*I* wish that you would be a good boy, and not talk such extravagant nonsense!"

"I shall see nothing of you," he insisted vehemently, "until we are fairly married, and I can get you away from this swarming hive of relations."

"My dear, I cannot give up my old friends because I have made a new one; and I must be civil to my

relations when they take the trouble to come to see me. You are very unreasonable."

"I am a brute; but sometimes it seems as if we were getting farther and farther from each other. I don't see as much of you as I did before we were engaged."

"I am sorry; but you must have patience. We shall be left in peace very soon; and in the mean time there is Beverly to look forward to. You will have me entirely to yourself for the whole afternoon."

This delightful prospect carried John cheerfully through a very gay week. He was always agreeable, in spite of his dislike for society, but this time he fairly outdid himself. Mary was pleased by the favorable impression that he made upon her friends, and flattered herself that popularity would soon reconcile him to society.

It chanced that Saturday was one of the hottest days of the season. "I am sorry it is so warm," John said, as Mary and he were walking to the train. He made the obvious remark that the weather suggested, but in reality he did not care what the temperature was, now that he had the enchanting prospect of a long afternoon with her.

"I am very sorry," she said; "the heat always uses me up."

"What a shame! Can't we give up going? I never can realize that anything is too much for you; you always look so strong and so cool."

"I am strong, and nothing is too much for me; but to expect me to be cool when the thermometer is 95° in the shade is asking a little too much."

"I did n't expect you to be cool," John said hastily. He wished that he did not always do or say

something so stupid when they were alone together. Their conversation after this was not brilliant. Mary owned that she was tired, and it was evident that she was not in a talkative mood. She was one of those persons to whom society is a stimulant, and she was always at her brightest when in company. At present she was feeling the after effects of a fortnight of incessant gayety.

"I have found a seat here," Graham said, after they had pushed their way into the hot and stuffy train. The car was already nearly full of limp women with their hair out of curl, fretful children, and bored men.

"This seat is on the sunny side," Mary objected.

"The view is on this side; I thought you would like it better."

"Thank you, I prefer the shady side on such a day as this. There, we have lost that other seat! Let us go into the next car."

"Very well, as you please."

The car in question was entirely full, excepting the little seat at the end, with its back to the engine.

"You had better sit here, until I see if I can find anything else," Graham said. He returned after a fruitless search. "I am sorry, but every seat is taken," he observed ruefully. Mary said nothing, but he was nevertheless keenly conscious of her dissatisfaction.

Graham was by nature more indifferent than most men to physical discomfort, but anything he gained in this direction was more than made up by unusual sensitiveness to mental discomfort. He was wretched now, because he had displeased Mary, and thus inadvertently turned the journey to which he

had been looking forward so eagerly into a penitential pilgrimage. A young man and woman were sitting in the seat opposite them, eating bananas in a friendly way, and joking and laughing as gayly as if the mercury were not standing at 95° in the shade.

"Those young people seem to be enjoying themselves," Graham hazarded after a long silence.

"They are very vulgar," Mary said, as she threw back her head in the haughty way that was habitual to her when displeased.

"I sometimes think it is an advantage to be a little vulgar," Graham observed audaciously; "one is so much less critical, and enjoys so many more things." He felt reckless.

"You could not be vulgar if you tried," Mary said, smiling at him. "Whatever your faults may be, they do not lie in that direction."

Peace was restored, and Graham's spirits once more rose. "You are very good to say so," he observed with mock seriousness. "I shall treasure up this graceful compliment; I believe it is the first that you ever paid me."

When they reached Boston, they had to cross the city; and upon arriving at the Eastern Depot it appeared that Graham had not allowed a sufficient time for their transportation, — their train was leaving the station as they entered it. He was remorseful, but his contrition did not soften Mary's heart.

"I never lost a train in my life," she said quietly. "We shall have to wait a whole hour, and on a day like this an hour is a small eternity." She sank into a seat in the waiting-room with a deep sigh.

"We might take a little drive," Graham suggested tentatively.

"A drive, — a drive in the neighborhood of the Eastern Depot! No, I thank you. No, there is nothing for it but to stay here. The worst of it is that no one will meet us, for I told Cousin Mary that if we came, we should be sure to take the five-o'clock train. We shall find them at dinner when we get there."

"If you think best, we can go back."

"No," she said wearily, "we will keep on."

Graham seated himself by her side, to await further developments. He did not dare to offer her a book, nor to attempt any conversation on indifferent topics.

"You look very bored," she said at last. "I know you are longing to get a newspaper; you have my permission to buy one."

He rose with alacrity, and Mary laughed. "I believe all men are alike in certain things," she said; "my father is always miserable if he does n't have a newspaper."

On the strength of her returning amiability, Graham risked getting the last number of the "Atlantic" for her. He also invested in some roses that had a suggestion of coolness and restfulness in their half-open buds and green leaves. He had not forgotten her having said that sentiment was not in his line; so he assumed his most matter-of-fact-air as he handed them to her.

"I thought these flowers might make you feel a little cooler," he observed, "and perhaps a plunge into the 'Atlantic' may be invigorating," he added, as he handed her the magazine. She ignored his joke, but was delighted with the flowers.

"They are lovely," she said; "how nice it was of you to get them for me! But would you mind ex-

changing the 'Atlantic' for the last 'Century'? I have seen the July 'Atlantic'; it has been out for some weeks."

While Mary was perusing the "Century" and John was reading his newspaper, a short thick-set man, with a sun-burned face and a most jovial expression, casually glanced in at the door. When he saw Graham, he beamed still more. He walked up to him and gave him a resounding slap on the shoulder. "Hullo, old man, how in the name of the old boy do *you* happen to be in this part of the world?" he asked, in a loud, cheerful voice. Graham looked up in surprise, and his face was instantly illumined by a smile of recognition. Mary glanced up too, and grew dignified at once. In that moment John realized how vulgar Jim Wright must seem to her.

He debated whether to introduce him or not. He could not do so without displeasing her; on the other hand, if he did not, he would certainly hurt Jim Wright's feelings. On the whole, the former alternative seemed fraught with less serious disaster.

"Mary," he said, "I want to introduce my friend Mr. Wright to you. Mr. Wright, Miss Brooks."

Mary gave the stiffest of little bows. Poor Jim Wright, who was about to frame a compliment, stood awkwardly a moment with his lips still apart as if they had been frozen into that position.

"Mr. Wright is a very especial friend of mine," Graham hastened to add, trying to make up by his own cordiality for her coldness. "He once nursed me through a severe illness. I don't know what I should have done without him."

"Indeed! How kind!"

It was useless to try to draw her into conversation,

and with a feeling of bitter disappointment Graham suggested to Jim Wright that they should take a little turn outside.

"Be sure to come back in time for the train," Mary entreated. "I shall expect you at ten minutes of six."

Graham was five minutes late when he reappeared in the waiting-room. Mary was not there. He found her at length in the train.

"I am sorry to be so unpunctual," he said penitently.

"Is your friend Mr. Wright a professional nurse?" she inquired.

"No, indeed! he would feel greatly insulted at the suggestion. He is in the first circles at Stony Creek. By the way, Mary, I wish you would be just a little more cordial to my friends. You looked at Jim Wright as if you thought it would have been more dignified for me to have died than to have owed my life to such a sorry specimen."

"John, how you exaggerate! What else could I have said? I knew he could not really be a friend of yours, — he is so very ordinary."

"There are a good many of my friends who will surprise you, Mary, I am afraid."

"If Mr. Wright is a specimen of the average Western man, I wonder how you could ever have endured life there."

"He is a good fellow, a warm-hearted reliable man, and the most devoted of friends," said Graham, hotly.

"He is not a gentleman, however," she said coldly.

When they reached their destination, it proved

that Mary's fears had not been groundless. There was no one there to meet them. Graham hailed a carriage and was about to put his companion into it, when she drew back.

"John! what a shabby carriage! The covering is dirty and ragged. Is there nothing better than this?"

"Oh, I dare say," he said wearily.

By this time all the other vehicles had been seized upon, so there was no alternative but to climb into this one. Mary gathered her dress about her, and shrank into the farthest corner. Now, there is no doubt that John was exasperating, and none the less so because he was so well meaning. Perhaps there is no form of discipline more provoking to quick practical people with a gift for seizing a situation, than that to which they are subjected by their slow but well-intentioned friends. This was the crowning blunder of a day of blunders. Mary made up her mind that the next time she went anywhere with John Graham, she would take the lead. As she came to this conclusion, she looked at him, and seeing that he was tired and depressed, her heart smote her.

"How lovely my roses are still! It was so good of you to get them for me." She watched him as she said these words. Their effect was magical, for his brow instantly cleared, and his face was lighted up by his grave sweet smile. No woman could help being flattered by such a tribute to her power.

"I wish our journey had not been so unlucky from beginning to end," he observed contritely. "I ought to be put in the pillory for making such a mess of it."

"It was accidental."

"And I have been so abominably cross," he added, with a shamefaced little laugh. "I don't know why I should expect you to be interested in an absolute stranger whose appearance is certainly against him."

"I thought he was a hotel-keeper or a hack-driver, or something of the kind. He is n't one of your very most congenial friends, is he, John?" she asked with a smile.

John smiled too. "I wish we could take this journey over again," he said.

"Good heavens! I don't."

"And manage it better, I mean. Think how we have wasted our afternoon, when I have so little time alone with you too. If I could only see more of you! I wish there were any way by which I could make you understand how much I care about you," he finished abruptly.

Mary, who was never so absorbed as to be oblivious to her surroundings, was conscious of the presence of the driver. "I realize it fully," she said hastily, and began nervously to point out the different houses along the way.

At length they reached the avenue that led to Miss MacLinton's abode; and a little later, Mary descended from her shabby carriage with the air of a princess in disguise.

## CHAPTER VII.

I hear what you say of the admirable parts and tried temper of the party you praise; but I see well that for all his purple cloaks I shall not like him, unless he is at last a poor Greek like me.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON.

JOHN and Mary were shown into a square hall, with a glass door at the end of it, opening on a piazza. Graham was conscious of a wide space filled with variegated rugs and palms, which gave an aspect of tropical luxuriance to the apartment. The light was streaming in through colored windows, and the wall was of some dull hue, but enlivened by a judicious sprinkling of water-colors. He felt as if he were inside a kaleidoscope that chanced to be stationary for the moment.

Miss MacLinton came forward to meet them with a certain restrained graciousness. She was, at first sight, an insignificant figure to be the motive power of this large establishment; but upon taking a closer survey, one recognized that air of distinction which is independent of features or figure. She was plain, but her plainness seemed but a part of her general completeness. She was so well bred, she was so quietly but perfectly dressed, and above all, she was so thoroughly satisfied with herself in an unobtrusive way, that one felt as if confronted by a standard of perfection. Graham found himself comparing her with Mary, and had a whimsical feeling that accord-

ing to this criterion the latter was too handsome to be in perfect taste. He wondered if Miss MacLinton did not think Mary's coloring too bright and her hair too dark, and whether she wholly liked her independent way of uttering her opinions. Her pleasant voice sounded almost loud in comparison with Miss MacLinton's silvery tones, whose voice was not an individual one, but belonged to a class which Graham had never met with outside of New England. There was something in its musical tone that suggested that the owner had never been ruffled, and knew nothing of the wear and tear of life. She was one of those persons who make their shy acquaintances conscious of their feet or their too bright attire, or whatever happens to be their vulnerable point.

"I am glad to see you both," Miss MacLinton said, "and so sorry that we did not send to meet you; but Mary wrote that you would be sure to come on the five-o'clock train, if you came; so we had given you up, as we always look upon her word as infallible."

"It was my fault, and I am exceedingly sorry," Graham said. "You must never consider Miss Brooks infallible when her movements are at all dependent upon mine."

Mary was looking nervously from Graham to Miss MacLinton to see what impression he was making upon her. She had expected him to be silent and ill at ease in the presence of her cousin, not realizing that he was never troubled by self-consciousness, unless it was forced upon him by herself. Mary wished, before many hours had elapsed, that John were a little more in awe of his hostess; for before the evening was over he had contrived to give utterance

to every heterodox opinion that he held, omitting nothing that could shock her prejudices.

After dinner they adjourned to the piazza, where some luxurious chairs were waiting to receive them. In front of them a velvety lawn stretched away until it joined the sea. A low wire fence formed its boundary, while geraniums and other bright-hued flowers unknown to Graham raised their heads above it, and stood out in startling relief against the blue of the water. They seemed an impertinence to him. Why could not people leave Nature to herself? Why must they spoil a fine prospect by dragging in flowers that were not native to the soil?

"Is n't this a lovely view?" Mary asked. "Charles Otis says that Cousin Mary's place is quite English; it is so finished."

"Everything is rough here, compared with England," murmured Miss MacLinton.

"I don't remember anything in England more finished than this lawn," Graham said. "In contrast with the West, you have no idea how super-civilized you seem to me in this part of the world."

"Super-civilized!" repeated Miss MacLinton; "and Matthew Arnold thinks us such barbarians. May I ask you in what way we strike you as super-civilized?"

There was something in the gentle tones of his hostess that had the effect upon Graham that a trumpet has upon a war-horse.

"You all have too much of everything," he said bluntly. "I have come from a part of the world where we have too little, and the contrast forces itself upon me at every turn. When, in addition, I tell you that I have been deep in Tolstoï lately, you

will see what I mean by saying that you strike me as super-civilized."

A bombshell could hardly have caused more commotion than these words, uttered in Graham's quiet way.

"My dear Mr. Graham," Miss MacLinton cried, aghast, "I hope you have not been converted by Tolstoï! You do not mean you would have us go back to a state of semi-barbarity? You do not think we ought to give up our property and support ourselves by manual labor? You cannot believe in non-resistance?"

"No; I don't believe in any of these things."

"What do you mean?" Mary asked, with an anxious expression of countenance.

He explained his views at some length. "We are not all reformers," he ended by saying; "but each of us can make sure that the people who work for us — our so-called inferiors, in reality our superiors in many ways — have a fair chance, and are not ground down and oppressed; then, on the other hand, we can simplify our lives, and set them an example of moderation rather than of display. We can show them that the best things in life are independent of fortune."

"I should like to ask you one question, Mr. Graham," Miss MacLinton said sweetly. "In what way do you consider the lower classes our superiors?"

"In the experience that is born of a life of toil and suffering. I never talk to a poor man without feeling how much I have to learn — and how little to give."

"You ought to go into the Associated Charities,

Mr. Graham," Miss MacLinton said in her condescending way.

"I have been told that before," he said with a smile, as a vision of Miss Rollins and her interesting family rose before him. "I am afraid I should not make an acceptable member of an organized army; I prefer to be a free lance."

After some conversation upon the differences between the East and the West, Miss MacLinton asked Graham if he had ever chanced to meet a dear friend of hers, a son of Lord Granby, who had been somewhere in his part of the world.

"Douglas Enderby? Yes, indeed; he is one of my best friends."

Mary was glad that John had some creditable friends. A long talk followed about Lord Granby, his estates in England, and his charming son. Miss MacLinton also found out incidentally that her visitor belonged to the Anderson branch of the Graham family, which stamped him at once as having the bluest of blood in his veins. After this there was a perceptible difference in her manner. She treated him as a man whose opinions, although erratic, are entitled to respect.

They chatted for the rest of the evening on the differences between England and America. Miss MacLinton candidly admitted that she wished her ancestors had never left the English soil.

"We have a very warm feeling for everything English in our family, Mr. Graham," she observed. "We not only have English blood in our veins, but we are also the fortunate possessors of many heirlooms. This candlestick came from England, and is one of our greatest treasures." As she spoke, she

handed the treasure in question to Graham. It was an old, somewhat battered brass candlestick; but the respect it inspired was so great that Graham could not but feel honored at being the favored guest who was to bear it company. He liked old things, he did not dislike England, and he had no objection to candles; yet such was the antagonism that Miss MacLinton aroused in him that he would have gladly exclaimed, "Give me a good American kerosene lamp."

Early the next morning he found his way to the little cove that lay at the foot of his hostess's domain. The sea was perfectly still; there was scarcely a ripple on it. Miniature waves plashed against the sand in a calm, restrained way, as if even they bowed to the standard of propriety which dominated this part of the world. At one end of the beach were some theatrical rocks that looked as if they had appeared there because it was expected of them. This was not the sea that Graham loved best. This view seemed as insipid to him as the life to which it formed a background. He hated it all. He liked a life that was real and vital; yet although he rebelled, he knew that at another time he might appreciate the peaceful beauty of the scene. He looked back at the house, and saw Mary coming down the path which led to the sea; in a moment he was with her, and his dissatisfaction was forgotten.

"I have something to tell you," she said, looking down on him from her station in the path above. "I saw you from my window, and I came out on purpose."

"That was very good of you." The descent was somewhat steep, and as Graham spoke, he held out

his hand to help her down. She ignored his assistance, and ran lightly past him, brushing the dew off the wild roses that formed a border to the path.

"Don't you want to know what I have to tell you?" she asked, putting her hand lightly on his arm.

"Of course I do," he answered gratefully.

"Cousin Mary MacLinton likes you very much," she said impressively.

"Oh, is that all?" Graham involuntarily released himself from her touch.

"All? My dear, it is a great deal. You have no idea how fastidious Cousin Mary is. She cannot bear Sam Randolph; and I was so afraid she would think you —" She paused.

"Unrefined?"

"No indeed, not that, but odd. But I might have spared myself my worries, for she told me that she thought you very interesting and original."

"My dear, 'original' is only 'odd' dressed up in its company clothes and on its best behavior."

"You were certainly not on your good behavior last evening. You said every extravagant thing you could; and if Cousin Mary likes you in spite of it, she will always like you. She said you were such a thorough gentleman, and so unusually well informed."

"What did she expect to find?" he said hotly. "Did she suppose you would engage yourself to a man without refinement?"

"How unreasonable you are!" broke in Mary, with a note of admiration in her voice. It was amazing to her that any one could care so little for the utterances of her oracle; and this indifference suggested certain unfathomed possibilities which appealed to her imagination.

"Mary," John said, drawing her hand through his arm, "I can't bear to see you so subservient to the opinions of a woman who has not half your intellect or force."

"Oh, John!"

"Don't allow yourself to judge with her eyes. Make up your own mind about persons and things. You are independent enough when you are with other people; don't let your cousin influence you so much. You already like me better than you did," he added, with a little laugh, "because I, or rather my ancestors, happen to please a narrow-minded, conventional —"

But this was going too far. "It is not right to speak so of her," she flashed out indignantly. "You must remember that she is like a mother to me. How can I help but be influenced by her?"

"You cannot help it," John said, loving her all the more for her loyalty; "and I ought never to have spoken of her as I did."

"You will try to love her, won't you, John?" she pleaded. "You have no idea how good and lovely she is."

John replied that he had no doubt she was all that was excellent, and that in time he should love her as much as Mary desired. This was not true, but it was true that he was penitent for his unguarded speech. His penitence made him very courteous to Miss MacLinton during the remainder of their stay. Mary was glad that he was beginning to recognize her charm. She listened to their talk about books, and was pleased that John had a chance to see how intellectual her cousin was.

John and Mary had an amicable journey home on

Monday morning. She was in the best of spirits, and ready to enjoy everything, although, with all his efforts, he could not get the conversation out of surface channels.

At the Eastern Station in Boston they met the Randolphs, who had been to East Gloucester to spend Sunday. Sam was in hilarious spirits, and Emily was equally happy in her quiet way. Sam surveyed Graham critically. "Emily," he said, drawing his wife away in mock terror, "come, let us hasten past our stylish relatives; we are not fit associates for those who have been sojourning in the halls of luxury and elegance. My dear Emily, do you realize that you have on a shade-hat, and that I am sporting my oldest necktie? But it is n't only clothes," he continued, warming to the subject at the signs of disapproval in his sister-in-law's face. "The trouble is a much more vital one! It is connected with our mental and moral dishabille. While our friends were spending Sunday in the quiet and all-that-it-should-be ancestral mansion of the MacLintons, and listening to the all-that-it-should-be sermon in the ancestral church, — while they were discussing the most learned and all-that-they-should-be books, you and I were — I will draw a veil, I will not expose ourselves any further to our *good*, but in spite of that, much-loved relations."

"Sam," said Emily, laughing, "you must explain what we really were doing, or they will think us much worse than we were. We were on the rocks at Eastern Point, all day, watching the surf," she added.

"Emily, that is true; but you have not mentioned how rough and excited the waves were, entirely too much so for the most sensitive and refined taste.

And you have not told where we were on Saturday afternoon. If any of our swell relations could have looked in on us on Saturday P. M., they would have cut our acquaintance forever."

"We lost the two-o'clock boat," Emily explained, "and had to wait until five. It was so stupid of the Company. They did not advertise that the time was to be changed from half-past two to two."

Graham was curious to know how Mrs. Randolph had borne a delay of three hours.

"Poor thing!" responded Mary. "How did you ever endure two hours and a half in such heat?"

"Oh, we went to the end of the wharf, where we had what breeze there was and a lovely view of the harbor. We had so made up our minds to the sea-trip that we would not go by train, and we imagined ourselves in Venice, or rather Sam did;" and Emily laughed at the recollection.

"I must not waste my time here any longer," Mary said, "for I have ever so many errands to do in town;" but as they had to wait for their respective horse-cars, the talk was prolonged a little.

"Graham," said Randolph, presently, "you are still in the alphabet of experience; in fact you have only reached *a*, *b*, *c*, — or rather, *f*, to be more exact."

"Why *f*?" Mary asked.

"*F* stands, my dear, for the barrel of flower
That when girls are engaged their fond friends on them shower."

"Is that an impromptu couplet?" Mary inquired.

Sam groaned. "Emily," he said, "let us come away. Let us take refuge in that East Boston

car, which is going in the opposite direction from what we wish; but no matter. She, my sister-in-law, the lady with the intellectual cast of face, thinks so meanly of my capabilities that she believes a little trifle like that one which I have just thrown off is the work of hours of premeditation! Come away, Emily, come away!"

Graham's and Emily's laughter and perhaps still more Mary's unwilling smiles spurred Sam on to fresh efforts. "The flowers are nothing to the wedding presents," he continued, "because the former are evanescent, while the latter stay by one always. Emily and I are at present the happy possessors of seven pie-knives, and in all these ten years we have never found an occasion to use them all at once."

"I should hope not," said Mary.

"Emily will never consent to have the kind of dinner-party that I have proposed, constructed with a view to displaying all our silver. I have urged that she should at least have a course of seven little pies, so that we may use our individual pie-knives. Janet and Greta have promised to come, to make our party large enough to accommodate all the pie-knives. The motto, of course, on each dinner-card would be, 'We are seven.' Can't you do a little of the talking, Graham?" Sam asked, stopping suddenly.

"There has been so much said, and it has been on the whole so well said, that I do not think I need further occupy the time," quoted Graham.

"That is n't so bad, considering that you have just come from the abode, not of evil spirits, but of dull spirits. Come on, Emily, here is our car at last; we will leave our friends to their all-that-it-should-be conversation."

## CHAPTER VIII.

When I remember something which I had
But which is gone, and I must do without,
I sometimes wonder that I can be glad
Even in cowslip time when hedges sprout.

JEAN INGELOW.

GRAHAM did not see Mary again for several days. He congratulated himself that his press of work came at a time when Kingshaven was unusually gay. He was so lucky as to escape three tea-parties and a dance. He knew that he could have had no satisfaction from Mary's society under these circumstances, had he been with her. He did not wonder that she enjoyed these festivities, and he was aware that in any case they were a necessary part of her life; but he longed more eagerly than ever for the time when she would belong wholly to him, and he could take her away from all these conflicting claims. He was jealous not only of her friends, but also of her father and sisters, and ashamed of himself for feeling so.

Late in the afternoon of the day when he finally finished his work, Graham went for a walk. The streets through which he passed were thronged with groups of ragged men and women, and dirty laughing children. In his present mood the sight did not depress him; he thought it a happy thing that they were free to follow their vagrant instincts. As he

passed the Massachusetts Hospital he glanced through the high fence; the late sunshine was falling across the closely shaven lawn, and touching the white cotton dresses of two nurses who had strolled out, arm in arm, to get a breath of the east wind. The conventual stillness of the place appealed to Graham's fancy; and these girls in their white caps and simple gowns, leading their useful lives within this quiet enclosure, seemed as remote as nuns from the ordinary work-a-day world. He wondered if they were happy in their work, and whether they had taken it up with the touch of enthusiasm which is the sign of a true vocation. He passed on, and presently turned into Leverett Street, finally stopping at his favorite fruit-stall. An Italian woman with a tired sad face was trying to quiet her little girl, who also had a touch of pathos in her large, dark eyes. The child stopped crying at Graham's approach, and gave him a sign of recognition. He thought how pretty she was, and how well her scarlet cap and cloak set off her beauty. He wished that Mary could see her; but this thought made him more critical, and when he looked at the little Anita with Mary's eyes, he noticed a stain on her rosy lips and a rent in the red cloak. The moment he fancied Mary by his side the wretched condition of the houses obtruded itself upon his view, and he became aware of the impurities in the air. When he passed the Hospital on his return, the two nurses were still lingering on the grass; one of them gave a discordant laugh. "I suppose they are very ordinary girls," he reflected, "and their lives are full of prosaic details, but they interest me none the less for that. How Edith would have enjoyed all this!" He had not yet spoken of his sister to Mary.

That evening, Graham approached the Brookses' house with eager impatience. It was five long days since he had seen Mary. The twilight was fading into night, and a crescent moon was shining in serene competition with the electric light at the corner.

The maid who came to the door greeted him with the unwelcome intelligence that the family were none of them at home, — "excepting Miss Janet," she added, as an after-thought. "If you care to see her, she is in the garden."

He made his way down the box-bordered path with an acute feeling of disappointment. The garden had an aspect of romance and mystery in this half-light, in striking contrast to its appearance under a mid-day sun. The carnations and the late roses were etherealized, and a tall bush with a feathery white flower made a delicate frost-work with its graceful branches. There was a touch of fog in the air which brought out a mixture of sweet odors. Janet was sitting on a bench at the farther end of the tennis-court, under an apple-tree that was standing out black and sharply outlined against the deepening sky. The moon was peeping through a rift in the clouds, and shone on her white dress and her drooping figure. Her head was resting on one of her hands, and she did not look up as Graham crossed the grass. The feeling of unreality took still stronger possession of him. She was as immovable as if she were under some spell. He came up behind her, and then took the vacant half of the bench. "Janet," he said; then to his surprise he saw that she was crying. "Janet," he repeated in distressed tones, "do tell me what is the matter!"

She gave a little sob, and struggled vainly for a

moment before she could speak. "There is nothing the matter," she said at last.

Her self-control touched him more than any complaints could have done. He longed to comfort her, but did not know how to begin. "Where is your sister?" was what he finally asked.

"She is at the Barnets'; they have a tea-party. She hoped you would come over as soon as you could." She had recovered herself and spoke in her usual composed tones.

"I am not dressed for a tea-party, and besides I detest them; I would rather stay out of doors."

There was a long silence, which she broke at last. "How beautiful the moonlight is!" she said. "This garden is like fairy-land on a night like this. Look at the yellow moths! Do you see how they shine as if they were balls of fire?"

"Yes; it is owing to the position of the electric light."

"I don't want a scientific explanation," she returned. "I would rather think that I am in an enchanted forest, far from all mundane things." She stooped and picked a handful of grass, which she proceeded to pull to pieces with nervous haste. She was pale, and there was a pathetic look in her eyes.

"Did you ever feel as if things were so hard that you could not bear them any longer?" she demanded abruptly, yielding to a sudden impulse; for Graham's face showed the sympathy that he could not put into words. "I ought not to have asked you that question," she hastened to add, before he could reply.

"Yes, I have felt so," he said slowly. "You will find it easier after a while," he added presently. "The commonplace truism that time softens grief,

is in a measure true; it seems almost disloyal to admit it. And one never really forgets; there is always the sense that something has gone out of one's life that can never come back; only after a time we find it easier to fill our niche in the world." He could understand that his and Mary's happiness must bring back her own happy past with renewed vividness.

"You don't know —" she began. "The trouble is not what you think. Work is what I need, — something to take me out of myself. I begged papa and Mary to let me go away to teach children; but papa was not willing to have a daughter of his earn her living, and Mary was sure that I was not strong enough, and when I broke down she naturally felt more decidedly than ever that she was right."

"She is right; you are too delicate for anything but an easy life."

"You have the man's way of looking at it. I thought *you* would see that an 'easy life' is often the hardest. When — when you had your great sorrow, would it have been easier for you if you had had nothing to do?"

"No, certainly not; but it is different with a woman."

"It is not different with a woman," she said quietly. "There is very little that I can do at home; Mary likes to take charge of the housekeeping. She tells me that if I care for outside work there is the Dorcas Society; but when one has lost all courage and faith, the Dorcas Society is rather cold comfort."

"Your courage and faith will come back, I am sure of it."

"I have n't lost my faith that things are in some way for the best," she hastened to explain. "Only in myself, and — and in other people. We can see such a little way, and — and life is so hard, and I used to be so happy."

"After a time your sense of personal daily loss will give way to a feeling of gratitude that you have had so much in your life," Graham said, not without a sense of the entire inadequacy of the observation. "We can never lose those friends who are in full sympathy with us, and it often seems as if they were a more effective influence and blessing when we have only their memory."

"You don't understand," she broke in impetuously; "my trouble is that there was no sympathy. I could bear everything if I had been loved as you were by your sister. I did not mean to say that;" and she glanced at him appealingly. "No one knows of it but Mary, and I have never spoken of it but once even to her. Please don't say anything to her about what I have told you. She thinks because I have begun to get back my spirits that I am all over it; I like to have her think that."

Graham took one of her little thin hands between his strong brown ones. "Poor child!" he said.

Janet sank her voice to a whisper, and glanced over her shoulder to make sure that no one was coming. "Mary could n't understand my telling you what I did," she said; "but as I have begun, I must go on."

Something at that moment flew past them, and its shadow was magnified to gigantic proportions. "What is that?" she asked with a nervous shiver.

"Only a moth; that huge shadow is caused by the position of the light."

"My story is not an uncommon one," Janet began. "If he had felt less sure of me, perhaps I might have kept his affection, such as it was; but he fell in love with some one else. It was very natural, but what made it hard was that he never told me. We grew farther and farther apart, and he became colder and colder. I ought to have understood; but he had tried so hard to make me care for him that it did not once occur to me that he could change. It was not until some time after his death that I accidentally found out that he had loved some one else. This was what so shook my faith, and made me lose my confidence in everything. Was the love of all men mere selfishness? Did they all tire of what they were sure of? Were there no such things as constancy and truth? Viewed by the light of my new knowledge, everything in my engagement was spoiled. In retrospect, all the little disappointments that I had felt in him I magnified into grave faults. I had no charity in my heart. You will think it very wicked of me, but I hated him for having spoiled my life. It was strange to find that I had not met with a great loss, but that I had never had anything to lose. Everybody felt so sorry for me, and it was such a mockery. I do not hate him now," she said, giving Graham a sweet, mournful glance. "I see that it could not have been helped. There was never any true sympathy between us; in any event we should have been miserable together."

"I wish I could ever express what I feel," Graham said awkwardly.

"I know that you are sorry for me," she re-

sponded quickly. "If I had not felt sure of your sympathy, I could never have told you what I have. Now you see why I want an entire change."

"You ought to have an entire change. I wish you could go to the Adirondacks for the summer. When my sister was ill we camped out there for two months, and the effect was magical upon her. There is a wonderful quality in the air. One forgets all care and trouble, and it is as if one had entered a new world. When you are stronger, you will once more begin to enjoy the small pleasures that form a part of our every-day lives. I will suggest the Adirondacks to Mary."

"Oh, it would be delightful!" she said with a deep-drawn breath of content; "and yet it seems cowardly to run away from one's troubles. It is wrong of me not to be grateful for all my blessings, and to think the life here dull and the people uninteresting."

"Did they seem so to you when you were happy?"

"No; everything was full of interest then. You have touched the root of the difficulty; the fault is in myself, and not in other people."

"I have felt the poverty and narrowness of life in a New England town," Graham said; "but I suspect the fault is largely in ourselves, as you say, — when we are happy, we make our own conditions. I am sure you need a change. The mind and body so act and react upon each other that it is a duty to take care of ourselves physically. Things are hard sometimes, and this knowledge comes to us all sooner or later; but suffering brings a compensation, — it makes us able to see the deeper significance

of life. You remember, do you not, what Emerson says in his essay on Compensation?"

"No, I have never read it."

"You had better read it; you will like it. I can't remember the exact words; but the idea is, that the compensations of calamity are made apparent after a time, and the man or woman who would have remained a sunny garden flower, with no room for its roots and too much sunshine for its head, is made, by the neglect of the gardener, the banyan of the forest, yielding shade and fruit to wide neighborhoods of men."

"If one could be like that!" Janet exclaimed, in a voice that showed how much his words had impressed her. "I have thought of something like it;" and then, as if afraid that she had said too much, she turned to another subject.

At last they heard the voices of their returning friends.

"We must go in," Janet said; and as they were crossing the grass she added abruptly: "Please forget what I have said, and only remember that I am naturally a very happy person. You must think me a weak-minded, hysterical girl; it is only that I was so tired this evening, and when I am depressed, I forget that the world will be bright again the next day."

"My dear child, I don't think you hysterical or weak-minded. I have seen too much of your gayety and good spirits, and you will have a great deal of happiness in your life yet; it comes in the most unexpected ways, but it is waiting for us all."

It was waiting for Graham in the person of Mary, whom they found on the piazza. She had on a

gauzy pink gown which partially revealed her finely moulded neck and arms, and as she held her hand out to John, the diamond in her engagement ring sparkled in the moonlight. He felt flooded with love and happiness. It was so wonderful, so incredible, that the fate of this radiant creature was connected with his. He was absorbed in the present blissful moment, and Janet and her troubles slipped from his mind as she noiselessly passed into the house. He had suffered enough to feel a sense of rest in Mary's healthy, well-balanced nature; when with her, one was almost persuaded that there were no such dark forces as pain and sorrow in the world.

## CHAPTER IX.

'T is best, where'er we are, to follow still
The custom of the country.

SOPHOCLES.

JOHN GRAHAM, who had always disliked teas more than any feature in society life, was to give one at his rooms! To be sure it was a very small one, consisting of a dozen persons; but nevertheless it was a tea, which George Hubbard, who heard of it casually through Sam Randolph, did not fail to point out. He wrote that he was sorry to hear that John had begun to descend that downward slope which could only terminate in Commonwealth Avenue. If the influence of Miss Brooks, after two months, was sufficient to effect such a radical change in his ideas, he did not dare to cast his prophetic eye into the remote future.

Graham had longed for an opportunity to exhibit his quarters in their gala aspect to Mary, ever since her sudden inroad into them during her nieces' occupancy. At that time his parlor had been in a state of flagrant disorder which it pained him to contemplate. Miss Janet Brooks from Hilltown was making her nieces a visit, and had expressed a desire to see his pictures and engravings, which made a good excuse for the tea. When he went over to give his invitation, he found the family assembled on the piazza. Miss Brooks the elder saluted him gravely. There was a military air about her tall, erect figure

that suggested an officer who has retired from active service. Her abundant brown hair, which was brushed straight back from a high forehead, had grown gray about the temples; and this made her large, dark eyes more striking than ever. She was dressed in a black gown, cut severely after a pattern of her own; and her belief in it was so great that one felt in an attitude of apology for conforming to the prevailing fashion.

"We are very busy this morning," Mary said, "because we are to have a lunch-party."

"For Miss Brooks? I am going to give a tea for her;" and he unfolded his scheme.

After it had been discussed at length and heartily approved of, Mary reverted to the lunch. "It is for Olivia Townsend from Philadelphia, who is in a very rich set," she explained.

"And so Mary is afraid that she will starve on less than nine courses," interposed her aunt, who had a certain grim humor of her own.

"Eight, Aunt Janet, only eight. Anna MacLinton's luncheon was such a success that I want mine to be equally attractive."

"It is very well for the MacLintons to have elaborate lunches, because it means no care nor thought to them," said Janet the younger; "but when we give one, the house is turned upside down for two days, and we have to oversee the cook and make some of the dishes ourselves, and papa and Aunt Janet are sent out to forage upon —"

"Do you mean to say that Miss Brooks is not to be at the lunch?" Graham broke in.

"Mr. Graham, I am too old; lunch-parties in Kingshaven are based upon similarity in age rather

than on congeniality. Your aunt Augusta has kindly asked me to come to her to-day, and please be sure to tell her that I shall be satisfied with nothing short of eight courses. I should prefer nine, but I will adapt myself to eight."

"This is a curious state of society," mused Graham, with his quiet smile. "A girl's aunt is dragged out to scenes of midnight revelry when she is longing for her bed, and then banished from her own lunch-table. And this — is Eastern civilization!"

"I could n't persuade Aunt Janet to stay to the lunch," Mary protested. "I was n't surprised that she did n't care for it, because most of the people who are coming are so stupid."

"Why do you have stupid people? Is it out of especial compliment to Miss Townsend?"

"Unfortunately, John, one has to think of something besides one's own selfish enjoyment on these occasions. I am trying to pay my debts."

"So far as I can gather from my winter's study, society in New England is wholly conducted upon the altruistic plan: every hostess entertains because she feels it to be a duty that she owes to others, rather than for her own enjoyment."

This heterodox sentiment was instantly frowned down, however, not only by Mary, but also by Janet. The latter admitted that society might be improved. "I am going to give a lunch according to my own lights some day," she said. "The guests will include Aunt Janet and Mrs. Otis, and I shall have it on a holiday, so that Sam Randolph can come, and I shall invite you, John; and the distinctive feature will be that I shall have only one course."

"When you have your tea, Mr. Graham," Miss

Brooks observed, "I trust that you will recollect that I do not share the simple tastes of my niece Janet. I am especially dependent on formality, and if it is possible to have eight courses at a tea I shall expect them; but above all things I beg that you will invite only those who are of a suitable age."

"I will remember; I think I shall not admit Janet and Greta, and I am not sure about Mary."

Mary was glad that John and her aunt understood each other so well; for that lady was so positive and pronounced that it was useless to try to suppress her, and her niece dreaded the collision that generally ensued when she presented her to her friends.

On the afternoon of Graham's tea every one agreed that his rooms looked very cosey in spite of the faded wall-paper and the shabby green sofa. His little tea-table was set so tastefully that it called forth exclamations of surprised approval from both Mary and Mrs. Maxwell. In the centre was a huge bowl full of roses. He had not forgotten that they were Mary's favorite flower, and ever since that morning in the garden at Kingshaven he had felt that they belonged to her by a divine right. On this afternoon she was frankly happy. Some of John's opinions had given her a nervous dread. She knew instinctively that she could mould him in most respects, but she was also aware of a certain amount of reserved force in him that had hitherto remained an unknown quantity to her. Here, however, were indications that his theories were not to be put into practice. There was only one thing that irritated her: her sworn enemy Bessie Maxwell was pouring out tea for her cousin, with her accustomed irritating self-satisfaction. It was pleasant to reflect that in a few months she her-

self would be doing the honors of a similar tea-table. She glanced at Mr. Maxwell, and thought how insignificant he was, and she had a sense of pride in John's superior height and good figure. "After all, beauty never counts for much in a man," she thought; "and John is so good, and so devoted to me. I am a very fortunate woman."

"I am glad you like my rooms," John said, after she had given voice to her approval. Mary, in common with most critical persons, caused keen and exquisite happiness by her commendation.

"I must show you my glimpse of the river," he went on; "you did n't see it when you were here before."

She went to the window, from which a pale gray strip of Charles River could be seen in the distance, with the spires and houses of Cambridge rising above it, and looking in the misty atmosphere like a blurred charcoal-sketch. Her attention, however, was riveted by some coal-sheds that loomed up conspicuously in the foreground. "You like your view because it is your disposition to make the best of things," she said, smiling. "Instead of looking facts squarely in the face, you idealize them. If I, for instance, with my different temperament, were in your place, I should say plainly, 'Those coal-sheds are hideous; they spoil my view.'"

John had been meaning to point out to her the house where he had lived when he was a little boy; but after these words he doubted whether she would feel any interest in seeing it, and he was unwilling to risk the pain which it would give him if she did not.

Meanwhile Greta had ensconced herself on the

cushioned seat of the other window, and Reinhart was hovering about her with unmistakable devotion. Miss Brooks the elder and Mrs. Randolph were turning over the contents of a portfolio of etchings, and listening to the lively talk of Sam and Janet, who were evidently unusually amusing, for the three were laughing heartily. Even Charles Otis, who was making himself generally useful, stopped abruptly in his transit, and apologized as he handed a cup of tea to Miss Brooks. "I hope you will pardon the very untidy appearance of this saucer," he said; "Sam and Janet have been so inconsiderate as to make me laugh. Will you take it as it is, or shall I fetch you another cup?" Charles had "fetched" things ever since his return from England the previous summer.

"Janet's spirits always run away with her when she is with Sam," Mary observed to John.

"I never knew any one who is so influenced by the person she is with," he answered. He could have wagered that in ten minutes she would be talking socialism with himself. He wished that she would treat him as she did Sam, for he so dearly loved to be amused. He had been regarded as a sympathetic elderly uncle by so many people that the part had ceased to have any novelty. As he watched Janet, he found it hard to believe that this sparkling creature was the depressed little girl of a few evenings before. At the moment there was something so radiant in her expression that she was absolutely beautiful. After a time he made his way to her. She was tired, and had sought refuge in one of the deep window-seats. Her vivacity had left her. She had a charming air of making herself entirely at home as she leaned lazily back against the cushion,

and began to draw off her long, loose-wristed tan-colored gloves.

"I have fallen in love with your view," she said.

"That is friendly of you; most people object to the coal-sheds."

"I like a view of this kind better than one that would generally be thought more beautiful. Perhaps I cannot make you understand what I mean, but I am going to try nevertheless." She always felt an impulse to speak to Graham of whatever chanced to be in her mind. "A glimpse, such as you have of the river over there, with two or three little sail-boats that are all white in the sun and all gray in the shadow, is to my mind more suggestive and more satisfying than a cut-and-dried view, like the one from Cousin Mary MacLinton's piazza. Do you understand me? I mean that I think one is always better pleased when one has to make an effort to find out beauty than when it is all arranged for one."

"Precisely; I have often felt the same thing without putting it into words."

"Another reason that I have for liking your view is the human element in it, and the thought that all this loveliness is so near a squalid region around the corner. It is such a pleasure to remember that there is beauty for everybody if they will only see it."

"Yes; the water and the sky are the common property of us all. I have often wished that I could make my poorer neighbors feel the refreshment, I might almost say the inspiration, in a walk over Cambridge bridge just at sunset, or in the twilight when the lights are beginning to come out one by one."

"Like so many household stars," added Janet,

"each representing a busy little planet, peopled with inhabitants who are living and suffering and enjoying their individual lives. Don't you wonder what they are all thinking about? I am so immensely curious concerning my kind." Janet was an easy person to talk with, for she always made her interlocutor feel that she took a special pleasure in his society. There was no effort, however, in doing so now, for there were always many things that she wanted to say to Graham. "It is such a comfort not to have to discuss teaspoons with you," she said at last, — "that is a phrase by which Emily and I designate the conversation that we have with some people. Not that I don't take a keen interest in teaspoons, only I think that sometimes they ought to hold a subordinate position."

"What are you two talking about so earnestly?" Charles Otis inquired, as he came up with a cup of tea for Janet.

"Teaspoons," she replied demurely.

Charles settled himself languidly in the other half of the window-seat by her. He had that appearance of relaxation which distinguishes the man who has nobly performed his duties. Each guest had been provided by him with fruit and little cakes, and he had chatted in his most friendly manner with every lady in the room. Graham moved away and left the field to him.

"I want to ask your advice, Janet," he said, with such gravity that a stranger would have felt sure that he wished to consult her on affairs as serious as business or love. "I am obliged to get a new tennis-suit," he continued in his musical voice. "You know I am going to the Mortons' for a week, and I can't

make up my mind whether a wholly white one or a white and blue one would be the more becoming."

Janet controlled her desire to laugh, and threw herself into the young man's interests with her characteristic good-nature. Charles was so ideally handsome, in his way, that she could never become wholly accustomed to the contrast between his looks and his words.

While Graham's guests were getting ready to take their departure, a letter came to him from a friend to whom he had written, by Mary's permission, to make inquiries concerning camps in the Adirondacks. The friend offered him his own shanty on the Fulton Lakes until September. John and Sam concocted a charming programme on the spot; and Reinhart and Thornton MacLinton joyfully accepted the invitation extended to them.

As John was walking with Mary to her horse-car, she asked him why he included Carl Reinhart in their party.

"Why should n't I? He is a capital fellow."

"Have n't you seen that he is in love with Greta?" she inquired resignedly.

John looked disturbed. "Do you mean that she does n't care for him?"

"Oh, John, you are so unpractical!" she sighed. "Don't you see that an engagement between them would be utterly out of the question? He is poor, and a foreigner; those are two insurmountable objections. I detest all foreigners."

"The question seems to be whether Greta detests all foreigners," he said dryly. "Reinhart is a simple-minded, honest young fellow, with talent enough to make his mark sooner or later."

"There would be years of poverty first, however, and Greta is not a girl to bear a life of constant privation; she would grow fretful under it. She is young and unformed; she enjoys his flattering speeches without a thought beyond, but if she were to see more of him something serious might come of it. Carl Reinhart is not to my taste. I have unusually clear insight into character, and am never mistaken in my judgments. He is all that you say; but in addition, he is passionate and weak, the last man to whom I would intrust the happiness of my sister. When you first suggested the trip to the Adirondacks, my chief reason for assenting so cordially was that I was glad of an excuse to keep them apart."

John was very penitent. He assured her that if he had had the least idea of her feelings, he would not have given the invitation. Finally, a bright thought struck him: "I will see him, and put the whole thing to him fairly and squarely, and retract my invitation."

"John! Don't you see why that would be the worst thing that you could do?" she cried in despair. "There may be nothing in it; I have no reason for thinking that he has ever indulged in a word of overt love-making. Fancy his hearing that I preferred his not joining us on Greta's account!"

"It was a stupid idea," John admitted. He would have seen the objections to it in a moment; but Mary's mind worked so much quicker than his that there was always ample time for her to make him feel that she thought him especially foolish, before he discovered that he had been so.

"All we can do is to keep them apart as much as

possible while he is with us," she said; "but please consult me before you ask any more of your friends to join our party."

"I will, Mary; I will indeed! You can't regret that I am a blundering idiot half as deeply as I do."

"You are not nearly so trying as most of your sex."

"My poor inferior sex! I owe you an apology for belonging to it, Mary."

They were waiting for the horse-car, and at this moment the others caught up with them. "I wish that Emily were going to the Adirondacks too," Janet was saying.

Emily and her children were to spend the rest of the summer in Kingshaven, and therefore Mary could leave her father with entire peace of mind.

"I shall be only too charmed to 'patronize' you all," Sam said. "We'll have a stunning time. Excuse me, Mary, — for I observe that my sister-in-law's ear is upon me, — that is a Hilltown expression, and not one of the slang phrases that I have learned from my wife."

## CHAPTER X.

. . . Every prospect pleases,
And only man is vile.

REGINALD HEBER.

JOHN and Mary had provided rival chaperones for the journey to the Adirondacks. This unfortunate contretemps was caused by the defection of Mrs. Otis, upon whom they had both agreed.

"I would do anything else for you, Jack," she said, "but I can never take a long drive on the best of roads without discomfort, and I am miserable whenever I am in a boat; you would wish me at home fifty times before the first day was over, as I have already explained to Mary, who was here this morning."

Bessie Maxwell, who was present, offered her services; and John accepted them gratefully, without a thought that Mary would not be pleased at this easy solution of the difficulty. Mary meanwhile had asked her cousin Miss MacLinton to go with them, certain that John would be charmed by this delightful addition to the company. The party was a small one, consisting merely of the two chaperones, the three Brookses, Sam, John, and Charles Otis. Reinhart and Thornton MacLinton were to join them later.

As John waited on the piazza of the hotel at Moose River with his friends for the horses which were

to sever the last link between them and civilization, he felt himself in an attitude of apology for the whole desolate region. He had no thoughts to spare for the bracing air and the beauty of the madly rushing river. His eyes were fastened upon the long procession of tourists, on lank and bony horses, in dilapidated buckboards, or on foot, who were coming from "the woods" with the air of having barely escaped with their lives. Those who were walking displayed heavy boots encased in mud, while their soft felt hats had apparently battled sturdily with fate and reluctantly given up the contest. Nothing escaped him, even to the uncertainty of color of the short flannel skirts of the women, which suggested an intimate acquaintance with both storm and sunshine.

"What very ordinary persons!" said Miss MacLinton, unconscious that her own soft felt hat was awry.

"Yes," said Charles Otis; "I fancy rather a rough crowd comes in here. The people one knows go to the Saranac Lakes and Keene Valley; but we shall be wholly independent of the outside world in our own camp."

Mary was not aware that the Fulton Lakes were in a region that was unfashionable until after she had given her consent to the journey. She could not draw back when she made the unpleasant discovery, for the air would be just as bracing for Janet, and her sisters were too enthusiastic over the plan for her to have the heart to throw cold water on it. Nevertheless it was hard, when she had hoped for an experience that she had often envied her friends, to find that she was merely going to Brown's Tract, — to a dense forest, and chain of mo-

notonous lakes, where there were no high mountains, and harder still, no interesting people.

"The buckboards are terrible," she sighed; "they seem on the point of dropping to pieces like the 'one-hoss shay.'"

John looked at her apprehensively. "I told you everything was rough here, but it is worse than I remembered it."

"I should judge that these are the same buckboards and horses that were used ten years ago, when you were last here; and they naturally have not improved in the interval," she responded.

"There is something patriarchal about our friends over there," said Sam Randolph, cheerfully, as a party on horseback came out of the woods. "It seems biblical, and suggests the Children of Israel in the wilderness. Don't you agree with me, Miss MacLinton?" he asked blandly, feeling intuitively that she thought this mild effort in more questionable taste than usual. "Ah! here comes your buckboard."

Miss MacLinton and Janet had chosen this method of locomotion as the least objectionable alternative, while the others preferred to take their chances on horseback. The buckboard had a curious aspect of attenuation, as if it were an ordinary carriage pulled out for the occasion, after the manner of a spy-glass. The wagon was well spattered with mud, and the patient horses had a weary look. Those that the rest of the party were to ride had the same forlorn aspect. Mary mounted hers with resignation. Miss MacLinton and her young cousin were securely strapped into their conveyance, lest they should be shaken out of it by the roughness of the road.

There was a little delay in their start, and therefore the others were soon far ahead of them.

John and Mary were the first to enter the woods. He had thought of Arcadia when the possibility of going with her to the Adirondacks had suggested itself to his mind. He could imagine nothing more idyllic than to spend three or four weeks with her in that refreshing region where there were no outside interruptions. It would be too delicious to drift from one silver lake to another with her, or to walk through the thickly wooded trails. He knew that she was fond of out-of-door exercise, and her pleasure in the proposed journey had filled him with delight. Her disappointed look gave him corresponding misery now. "She will hate it all," he thought; "why did I ever bring her here?" He had not calculated, however, upon Mary's nerve, when a situation was inevitable. Presently the cloud disappeared from her brow, and she indulged in a mild joke at the expense of her horse. "Her pleasure was spoiled when we went to Beverly, by being on the sunny side of the car," thought John, "and she bears the discomfort of this break-neck road without a murmur; how impossible it is to foretell the mood of even the most reliable of women!" His spirits rose to the point of elation, and he felt as happy as a boy.

Meanwhile Miss MacLinton and Janet were jolting along the rough road. Whenever they went over a particularly high rock, Janet clung to the strap with frightened tenacity, feeling that her last hour had come. They had driven perhaps three miles, when they encountered two rough-looking men who were coming from a spring in the woods.

"I say," called out one of them, "is this the only buckboard that 's going in to-night?"

"I reckon it is," said the driver, who was a meek little man with a deprecatory manner.

"Then you 'll have to take us in; we engaged a buckboard." The speaker was tall and powerfully built, and carried a gun over his shoulder; his companion was shorter and looked more pacific. The two were about to climb into the front seat without further prelude.

"We engaged this buckboard," said Miss MacLinton, haughtily. "Driver, I can on no account permit this intrusion."

The more formidable of the two men eyed her silently for a moment, and then proceeded to get into the wagon. His friend followed his example. The latter wore spectacles, which reassured Janet somewhat, as she had a theory that they were a mark of respectability; she also reflected that in their flannel garb Sam and John looked like highwaymen.

"Did you hear what I said?" Miss MacLinton pursued in her silvery tones.

The men glared at her, but they did not quail before that usually impressive presence. There was nothing awe-inspiring in the plain elderly woman with a gray flannel dress and a black felt hat tilted a little to one side. The Adirondacks are as levelling as death.

"Sorry to incommode you, ladies, but it can't be helped," said the thin, wiry man, giving Janet a keen glance through his spectacles. The driver was so crowded under the new régime that he preferred to walk; and as he left his party, he thrust the reins into the hands of the larger of the two men, with the careless question, "You drive, of course?"

"Don't know as I can drive over these roads," he muttered.

"He can't drive," Janet whispered, in extreme terror. "Where do you suppose Sam is? If he were here, he would do something."

"Driver!" called Miss MacLinton, gently; but the new driver was already gathering up the reins with uncompromising decision. "You'll have to hold my gun," he said to his companion.

"Is it loaded?" he asked anxiously. "I ain't much acquainted with guns."

"Yes, it's loaded."

The man in spectacles looked apprehensively at the gun and slung it over his shoulder, pointing the muzzle straight at Janet, who was speechless with fright; for with each fresh jolt of the wagon she was sure that this time it would go off.

"How calm and brave the ladies are!" one of the men observed after a time. "They are a lesson to us; we 've done nothing but grumble over the rocks and mud-holes the whole way. I should say that you, madam," and he turned to Miss MacLinton with a patronizing smile, "was brought up in these parts, you take it so quiet."

"I am not afraid of the roads, but I am afraid of your gun. If you will do me the favor to arrange it so that if it should go off it will not shoot my niece, I will be greatly obliged to you."

After this timely intervention Janet breathed freer, and they drove on in comparative comfort, until they reached a spring by the side of the road, at which point the two men descended.

"Cousin Mary," said Janet, excitedly, "do you see what they are doing? They are drinking some-

thing; the man in spectacles has taken out a large black bottle! And I thought he was so respectable," she added with a nervous laugh. The humor as well as the grim tragedy of the situation overpowered her: it seemed the irony of fate that her cousin Miss MacLinton, of all persons, should be the one forced to travel with such companions. The men returned only too quickly, and the pitching of the buckboard was even more unendurable after this brief respite. They had reached the densest part of the woods, and Miss MacLinton pointed out the beauty of the lofty pines and hemlocks in their primeval grandeur as calmly as if she were not obliged to make a sudden dive for the strap in the midst of a sentence.

"We shall lose the steamer at this rate," said the driver, as he glanced at his watch. "She has to go at just such a time, for the captain don't dare run her in among the snags after dark. We shall have to spend the night at the Old Forge, — all hands, I guess, — and there is always rather a rough crowd there."

"Can't you drive faster?" pleaded Janet.

"We are liable to smash something if we do, lady."

They proceeded some distance without further words, and silence on this occasion was more golden than speech.

"Ain't there another spring somewheres round here?" one of the men asked at last.

"No, friend, there ain't no more."

"If we can't get any water, we shall have to take our whiskey straight;" and he produced the black bottle, and began to sip the contents timorously, eying Miss MacLinton apologetically through his spectacles. "I expect these ladies will think we are

awful," he broke out at last, after his companion had taken a long draught with utter disregard to public opinion on the back seat. "I would have you to know, ladies, that at home we are very respectable characters, but we have to come off to the woods once in a while for a little spree. I never could take whiskey straight," he added in an aside.

It was growing chilly; and night, which sets in early in the woods, would soon be upon them. Janet drew her shawl about her with a shiver. They passed a tree with the number of miles which they had travelled emblazoned on it. Could human fortitude endure the four that still remained? They were already so lame and stiff that each fresh jolt represented another turn on the rack.

"How do you like the Adirondacks, Cousin Mary?" Janet inquired, with a futile attempt at a laugh.

"Which do you enjoy most, — driving over these roads when you're sober or when you're drunk?" was the question that was asked on the front seat.

"I'm not drunk; I'm as sober as you are. Give me the lines."

His friend muttered something under his breath, and drove on. Janet gave a sigh of relief.

"Why won't you let me drive?" whined the other. "Do you think I can't?" There was no answer; his companion still kept the reins.

"I tell you I can drive, and what's more, I *will* drive; give me those lines!"

Janet saw to her horror that the reins were handed to him. Her last slender thread of reliance had snapped. Their legitimate driver was so far behind them that her voice could not reach him, and there were three miles yet to travel before they could rejoin

their faithless party They were still in the midst of the forest, and the silence was broken only by the rumbling of their wheels and the soughing of the wind through the trees. A steep little hill was just ahead of them, down which their new driver rattled triumphantly. They caught their breath. "I told you I could drive," he said, when he had safely reached the level road beyond.

A few moments later they emerged from the woods. The worst of the trip was over. In spite of her fatigue and fright, Janet was struck by the view which greeted her. In the direction whence they had come lay the sombre forest, while before them stretched away a peaceful valley bounded by two hills, behind which the sun had just sunk; and the pink radiance that it had left was the one bit of cheer in the desolate prospect. At their right a gray, deserted house, which had long since fallen into decay, completed the impression of solitude and isolation.

"That is the house where the murder was committed," the thin man announced carelessly.

The girl shivered. This was the last touch needed to fill out the picture.

"They say the murderer did not have the right on his side," commented the other. "Give me those reins!"

He was refreshed by his nap, and ready for action. His companion, however, had no thought of complying with his request. It was evident that the whiskey was beginning to affect him. He seized the whip and gave it a resounding crack; the horses plunged forward. There was a struggle between the two men, who both used the whip unmercifully, and

the frightened animals broke into a run. There was a crash, and then a sudden halt. Something in the harness had given way. One of the men sprang out to examine it, and then observed that if he had a stout piece of twine he could fix it so it would last until they could reach the Old Forge.

"We 'll have to wait till the driver catches up with us," he added ruefully. They were both sobered by the accident.

"It's two miles to the Old Forge, and we may have to walk it," explained the man in spectacles. "We shall have to spend the night there, sure! Give us the black bottle; we may as well mug up while we are waiting."

Janet glanced at her cousin in speechless terror. Miss MacLinton was pale, but composed.

At this critical juncture the clatter of horses' hoofs was heard. Some one on horseback was coming into view. With a rush of thankfulness Janet recognized their deliverer; it was John Graham. One of the men was in the act of raising the bottle to his lips, while the other was still examining the harness.

"Has there been an accident?" Graham asked anxiously. "We wondered what had delayed you." In another moment he had grasped the situation. "Where is the driver?" he demanded shortly.

"He wanted to walk; he is behind. These gentlemen said that they had engaged this wagon," Janet explained nervously and pacifically. She was more afraid of John in his anger than she had been of the two men. If he were to provoke the wrath of the stronger of their travelling companions, what might not happen? — for the man's easy familiarity with murders remained painfully distinct in her mind.

John could never recollect the details of what occurred. He could only recall that he had used language more forcible than polite; that he had seized the black bottle and thrown it against a rock; that he had ordered one of the men to help him with the harness, and then told him that he could ride his horse, for he would drive. "Your friend will have to walk," he added.

Neither of them showed the slightest disposition to dispute his orders. The man in spectacles slunk out of the buckboard with apprehensive agility, while his friend was impressed by Graham's decision. After a short delay the vehicle was once more in motion, and rapidly distancing its former occupants. The road to the Old Forge was level and fairly good; and the horses travelled it with a steady, even pace, for they recognized the guidance of a practised hand.

Anger, with Graham, was always the affair of a moment, and on this occasion it speedily changed to amusement; but when he turned to make some laughing comment upon the scene that had just taken place, he found Miss MacLinton wholly unresponsive. At first he could not read the meaning of her cold looks, but it presently occurred to him that she would have preferred to be abandoned to her fate rather than be saved at the expense of such an undignified loss of temper on his part. It was a whimsical idea, and he developed it to his own satisfaction as he drove on in silence. He felt that he owed her an apology, but he reflected that this was no new sensation. It struck him that when in her presence he had better adopt the permanent attitude of standing hat in hand with downcast eyes.

When they reached the Lake they found that the

little steamer was still at the wharf. Their friends ensconced Miss MacLinton and Janet in the warmest corner of the stern, and then crowded around them eager to hear their adventures and to relate their own.

In reality the trip through the Lakes was not a long one; but the solitude, the uncertainty as to when they should reach their destination, and above all the darkness, made the time stretch on interminably. Janet was absorbed in the weird beauty of the view. She had an indistinct impression of mountains on both sides, for the height of the hills was magnified by the night, and of vast stretches of forest and utter isolation. Every now and then their connection with this strange unfamiliar world was made apparent by their stopping before a camp; when a little boat would glide silently out from the shore, and come to their tug for the mail. A series of bonfires were the signs of these camps, and against this lurid background a group of black figures would stand out, suggesting witches surrounding a caldron. Janet felt as if she were being rowed across the "Styx" by Charon.

At last they reached a roughly boarded, weather-worn building that was to be their abiding-place for the next few weeks. A huge camp-fire was glowing cheerfully before it, and a guide was throwing on some branches of balsam-pine which made the air sweet with its fragance. As they approached the shanty, poor Mary had a twinge of homesickness. She could see, through the open door, a heavily bearded man setting the long table with the thickest of china dishes, and she had a longing to join Emily and her father at their dainty tea-table. "There

will be several weeks of it," she thought, "and the worst of it is that I must not let any of them suspect how much I dislike it."

Sam, however, had a suspicion that the environment was not wholly to her mind, and he tried to cheer her after his peculiar fashion.

"Sister-in-law of my soul," he said, drawing Mary's arm through his, "permit me to conduct you to the Temporary Home for Tramps."

## CHAPTER XI.

Meanwhile we two will sit and walk together
Under the roof of blue Ionian weather,
And wander in the meadows, or ascend
The mossy mountains.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.

MARY was sitting by the fire in the "living-room" of the camp with her portfolio in her lap. It was raining outside, but the clouds were lifting a little, and showing here and there a bit of promise in the shape of a strip of blue. The more venturesome spirits were afloat in their canoes in spite of the weather; but Mary always objected to getting wet, and she was afraid to have Janet try the chances of the uncertain day. Charles Otis had been playing backgammon with the latter, and had now gone in search of a book to read to her. Three days of incessant rain had forced upon him the opinion that the Adirondacks had been greatly overrated. John came in presently, and went over to Mary's corner.

"I begin to feel that I should have had a better chance of knowing your impressions of the Adirondacks if I had stayed at home," he said with a smile, as he pointed to the sheets of paper in her irreproachable handwriting that were lying in a neat pile on the table. She did not look up, for she was in a hurry to finish her letter.

"I will only interrupt you for one moment,"

Graham continued incautiously, "to ask if you can find time to go on with our reading; we can have a long uninterrupted morning."

Mary laid down her pen deliberately. "John," she said, "I may as well tell you once for all that it annoys me to be interrupted when I am writing; and as for the reading aloud, it is no pleasure to me, for I cannot keep my mind on the book. I would much rather read to myself, especially as I prefer to choose my own literature."

She took up her pen again and began to write rapidly, not looking at John as he went out of the room. She had not meant to speak so uncompromisingly, but she had been forced into it by a long series of provocations. All the women who had known Graham intimately had suffered in a similar way at his hands; but his sister and aunts and cousins had borne with his faults with whatever philosophy they could assume, as something inherent in the nature of man. Mary, however, could see no reason why she and her friends should be annoyed by the irritating peculiarities of her lover, when they were of a kind that could be cured.

Janet waited until her sister had finished her letter before she spoke, for she had been well trained. "Mary," she said, "I don't think you realize how much pain you give John when you speak to him as you did just now; he cares so much about you that it makes him miserable."

"It is very foolish of him to be so sensitive; I never trouble myself over what people say. Life is too short to stop to feel hurt at every careless speech."

"But, Mary, when you can be so nice, I wish you

would show him a little more how much you care for him. You are so angelic to me."

"My dear, he is a man; one cannot treat a man as one treats one's sister."

"Well, if you are too reserved to let him know by words, you could show him by actions. For instance, it gives him so much pleasure to read things to you."

"My dear little girl, why is it any more important that I should give him pleasure by listening to stupid books than that he should give me pleasure by the infinitely easier method of desisting from reading?"

"He is trying," Janet admitted, "and sometimes inconsiderate; but a mild amount of reading —"

Mary rose abruptly. "I suppose you think that I ought to let him read the whole of Count Tolstoï's 'Confessions' aloud," she said, pacing the room rapidly, "when I think Tolstoï a crank, and have n't the smallest shred of belief in his fantastic ideas. I have no respect for a man whose family has to throw itself on the protection of the government, and who helps on the work of the race by making poor shoes. If Count Tolstoï could do anything well himself, I should listen to him more tolerantly."

"John agrees that he is unpractical," Janet said eagerly; "only he likes the spirit of the man; he thinks him so disinterested and noble —"

"Janet, this is a little too much. Don't begin upon this fatal subject, I beg of you! I am worn to a shadow already between Cousin Mary and John, who think and talk of nothing but Tolstoï."

"There are other books you could read together," Janet suggested.

"Other books! I should say there were! *Others*

is a mild way of putting it, Janet. There are libraries of books that John would be only too charmed to read aloud to me. It is much better that he should see me in my true colors. I have never pretended to be intellectual, if I do live in Boston; and if I were to let him read to me now, it would be entering upon a course of deceit which I could not keep up."

Mary never allowed that she was in the wrong, — it was not her way; but she was unusually gentle with John that afternoon, and suggested that he should take her for a row.

"We will spend the whole afternoon on the water, if you like," she said.

"Suppose we go to Hess's Camp to see if there are any new arrivals?" she suggested, after they had pushed off from shore, and were drifting idly along in their slender canoe. She always liked a definite object in view when she went anywhere.

"Very well. I had thought that perhaps we could go up Bald Mountain, since it has cleared off so gloriously. It is an afternoon in a hundred for it, and you have been so anxious for a mountain climb."

"Yes; I am sorry that there are not more mountains here."

"Shall we try it?" he asked, beginning to back water and to point the bow of the boat toward the mountain, which was named from its frowning summit of rocks.

"You and I alone, do you mean?"

"Yes, I did mean it."

"But, John, there is no pleasure in climbing a mountain without a party. Of course we must wait for the others. Janet would be dreadfully grieved if we went without her, to say nothing of Sam and

Greta and Cousin Mary; and besides, Thornton and Mr. Reinhart are coming to-night, and at any rate the woods are still very wet."

When they reached the green little island where Hess's Camp was situated, they found by the visitors' book that all the guests were unknown to them, — a disappointment which Mary told herself she had expected. They explored the island, and finally found a sheltered nook in which to sit.

"How out of the world we are!" said Graham. "Is n't the stillness impressive here? I like to think that in this part of the Adirondacks we are cut off from all communication with the outside world excepting by water, and by the narrow paths through the woods that form the hunter's trail. I believe I am half a savage, for this kind of thing makes life seem more worth the living to me than anything else."

Mary was silent, for she had nothing to say that John would like to hear.

"Look at the sunlight on that group of trees," he continued. He wondered if she were as penetrated by delight as he was. "It is a new experience, is it not? It is like having a sixth sense, as Janet says."

"It is certainly a new experience." Mary always had an uncomfortable feeling of hypocrisy when she did not express the whole of her mind, and yet she was beginning to learn that sometimes half the truth is more productive of harmony than the whole. "I like the exercise of a walk through the woods when it is not too wet" (this she could say with perfect sincerity), "and I enjoy the rowing if I can do my share of it. It is sometimes a little hard for a person of my active temperament to have to sit still so much of the time,

and I have an uncomfortable feeling occasionally, when I think how far we are from railroads and even from horses; still, as you say, it is a new experience, and I am glad I came, although I wish there were more people here."

"What do you want of people?" he asked vehemently. "Is n't it enough that we have each other?" He took one of her hands, and pressed it to his lips with a sudden fervor which was most discomposing. "Mary, I wish I knew how to make you care a little more for me. If your friends and your family are always going to be so much more to you than I am, I don't see how I can ever make you happy. You don't know how I feel about you; it is natural that you should not, but —"

"John, you are morbid!" Mary exclaimed, drawing away her hand and looking at him in surprise. "The reason I liked you was because you seemed so sensible and self-contained, and not to want impossible things."

"If I could only feel sure that you cared for me a little."

"If I had not cared for you, should I have engaged myself to you?"

"You might have made a mistake; I have the feeling all the time that you are discovering one fault after another in me."

"You must not have such foolish fancies," she said lightly.

"Look here, Mary!" and once again he got possession of her hand. "This thing must be settled in one way or another. You know that I love you more and more every day, and yet sometimes you are so cold that I feel that you do not love me at all. If

you think you have made a mistake, it will be a great deal better to give the whole thing up now."

"But I don't think that I have made a mistake. I never expected you to be perfect, but I do care for you." She dropped her eyes and colored at the admission. "I don't love you in a romantic way, for I see you too clearly for that, and I wish you would get over your illusions about me. Things would be so much more comfortable then." She took John's hand in hers, and stroked it gently with an impulse of tenderness, as if he had been a wayward child, and she a kind but firm mamma. "My dear, you must not expect me to say much, it is not my way. Even with my father I am very reserved, and you may as well understand once for all that I dislike demonstration; expression always cheapens a thing."

This sentiment sounded so lofty, as she uttered it with a look of repose in her soft luminous eyes, that Graham felt a sense of unworthiness. He knew that he had not reached the same high plane.

"I always like my friends to show their affection for me by actions rather than words," she added.

"I will remember. I won't tell her about New York to-day," he thought; "I will wait until I hear again."

While they had been talking, an ominous cloud had gathered behind them. Graham was not a true weather-prophet, for it had not cleared definitely. Suddenly, with no warning, they felt some drops on their faces.

"We must make for Hess's Camp," John said, knowing how much Mary disliked the rain.

It was a long shower, — one, in fact, that bid fair to settle into a storm. Mary and John dried themselves

before the fire in the hotel parlor, and watched the clouds apprehensively.

"We must stay here to supper," he said. "I am so sorry. It was all my fault; I ought to have kept better track of the weather."

"Never mind!" she returned brightly. "It will be an amusing adventure."

He watched her every movement as she stood before the fire in her short blue flannel dress with the red cap and the little red belt. He had not been so happy for many a day. So she loved him; she had admitted it, reluctantly and shamefacedly; she really loved him, — not as he loved her, but that was too much to expect. He was blissfully happy as they ate their solitary meal together; it was the first time that such a chance had occurred. He wondered how it would seem to have that bright face looking at him every day across the table. On the whole, he was glad that they liked such different things. It would be monotonous to have a wife who was merely the echo of one's self.

They had a charming row home in the moonlight, for it cleared at last. They found their friends sitting around the bonfire on rubber blankets. Reinhart and Thornton MacLinton had just come by the steamer. Greta was leaning forward throwing on branches of pine-balsam, which the flames caught, flashing up into brighter life. There was a look of irrepressible hopefulness in Reinhart's face as he watched her, that cut Graham to the heart.

"Has the hunting begun yet?" asked Thornton.

"It does not begin until the 20th," Greta replied, — "I am surprised at your ignorance, I've known that ever since I was a small child, — for a

whole week. It's so nice to wear short dresses and be a little girl again. When the hunting begins, John has promised to take me floating for deer at midnight."

"My dear Greta —"

"Don't speak!" she said, putting up her hand imperiously. "I always like silent men best. It was the same as a promise; for when you said no woman could keep quiet at the critical moment, I told you that I would n't say a word, and I said if I did speak, it would be all for the best, for I should want the poor deer to get off unhurt."

"You do sometimes feel sorry for the unfortunate?" Reinhart asked in a low tone.

"Sometimes."

"Will your compassion extend so far as to let me take you out in a canoe to-morrow morning?" he inquired eagerly, fixing his dark eyes on her with such an unguarded expression of admiration that Mary hastened to ask him some questions about his journey.

In point of fact, Reinhart and Greta went on a long row the next day, but Mary was in the boat with them. John, in consequence, was obliged to content himself with Miss MacLinton and Bessie Maxwell, for companionship in his canoe.

Mary was relieved that Greta's intercourse with her questionable admirer was to be interrupted by a four-days' excursion to Big Moose Lake, where some friends of Thornton had a camp. They had asked him to bring some of his party for a visit, and it had been agreed that Sam, Janet, and Greta should go.

The day of their departure Mary was once more free to devote herself to John. They were sitting

under the trees, a little to the right of the shanty by the edge of the lake. She had determined to give the whole afternoon to him. Ever since their expedition to Hess's Island their intercourse had assumed a phase which was most acceptable to her.

John had thrown himself down on the grass at her feet, and was lazily looking at her as she drew on a pair of chamois-skin gloves, and then began to strip the balsam boughs which lay in her lap, collecting their fragrant needles for future use.

"How much patience you have!" he observed. "Is this the fifth or the tenth pillow?"

"Only the second. By the way, would you like one?"

"One that you had made, do you mean?"

"Yes; and if you don't make too much fun of my industry, you shall have one."

"If that is all you require, I assure you I can think of no way of spending one's time that is so profitable and delightful, when one is at the Adirondacks, as to sit in one's front yard, so to speak, and make balsam-pillows."

Mary laughed, and thought John charming. He was so much more attractive when he did not let his feelings run away with him. She also thought how well he looked in blue flannel. It was much more becoming to him than the garb of civilization. She was proud of his fine figure, and rejoiced in his strength. She liked to see him shoulder a canoe with as great ease as the guides, and she took equal pleasure in the strong stroke that he could pull. It was a pity that these accomplishments were not useful in Boston. They talked about trifles. John was nerving himself to tell her a piece of news which he

found it harder to break to her with each added day of delay.

"I have finished my stint," she said at last, gathering up her newspaper with its freight of needles, "and now I am ready to go for a row whenever you like, — at least if you will let me row; I feel the need of exercise."

They pushed off from shore, and Graham watched her long steady strokes in silence. "Mary," he said nervously at last, "I had a letter this morning that makes it seem best that I should go to New York to live in the autumn, and I thought — I hoped — perhaps — you might find it possible to be married earlier than we at first planned, and go with me."

"John," said Mary, in consternation, "my dear! You don't mean — you can't mean that you expect *me* to live in New York!"

She had stopped rowing, and was looking at him in breathless excitement.

Graham felt that a crisis was at hand, and braced himself for it.

"You are so practical, Mary, that I am sure you will see all the reasons for the step." He unfolded them at length. He told her how much better it would be for him to live in New York in a business point of view, and he gave her the details of the partnership which he proposed forming with his friend Stephen Hubbard, George's older brother. She listened in ominous silence. Her cheeks were glowing, and there were decisive lines about her mouth.

"Have you nothing to say?" he inquired desperately, after five minutes of monologue.

"Nothing, John. Only one thing, at least, and

that is that it never once occurred to me that we should live anywhere but in Boston. Why have you let me go on planning for it all this time?"

"I did n't know you were planning for it. I never thought of living in Boston permanently. I did think I might stay there this winter, but now the other plan seems best."

"When you suggested building in Kingshaven, I supposed that we were to live in Boston in the winter."

"I was afraid you would not take kindly to the idea of New York at first," owned Graham; "but I am sure that your good sense will tell you it is best. Apart from the disadvantages of Boston in a business way, I do not like the climate nor the people nor the social atmosphere of the place."

Mary opened her eyes in astonishment. "John, you don't know what you are saying. You can't really feel so about Boston, with all your friends!"

"I mean every word of it." He looked unconquerably strong, as he sat in the stern, forced to be quiet because she held the oars, but with an expression of undisguised determination.

For a moment Mary's resolution was shaken; she was almost overmastered by his strength. Her pride came to her aid, however, and a desire to measure her own strength with that of this strong man. She must not yield now; her future happiness depended upon her remaining firm.

"How can your living in Boston make any difference?" she said, beginning to row again with long, even strokes. "You have to go to the West so much, in any event, that it will only mean a somewhat longer journey to take; and if you are to be

away so often, that is all the more reason for my being near the family."

"Mary, I thought I had made everything clear to you. Can't you see how living in New York is almost a necessity?" and he carefully recapitulated his explanation.

"No; I cannot see why it is necessary. You have so much money that it can't make any difference whether your business facilities are a little greater or less. Why not give up engineering altogether?"

"You certainly would n't advise my doing nothing for the rest of my life, — you, with your energy and love of work?"

"Of course not! I despise a man who is idle; but there are various things that you could do, besides engineering. You could go into politics, for instance."

Graham laughed outright.

"Well, then, there is charity. You could build model tenement-houses, and do a great deal of good to the poor."

"Mary, you might as well suggest to a cobbler to make hats, or to a hatter to manufacture jewelry, as to advise me, at my time of life, to give up the one thing I can do, and take up something entirely uncongenial to me. That is simply out of the question," he concluded, with such decision that she knew it would be useless to argue upon that point any longer. If he thought best to keep on with his laborious profession, it was his affair, not hers; but the place where they were to live made far more difference to her than it could to him.

"John, dear," she pleaded, "you will have to live in Boston; I could n't be so far away from the family

as New York." Her brown eyes looked so pitiful, and the little tremor in her voice suggested such a depth of feeling that Graham felt like a hard-hearted tyrant.

"Dearest," he said, "you don't know how much I dislike to disappoint you, but I am sure it is best that we should go to New York."

A picture suddenly rose before Mary of the poverty of the future if denuded of all her cherished plans. "I don't know any one in New York," she said, "and I do hate it so. You cannot feel about Boston as strongly as I do about New York."

"I can't bear to give you pain. If it were only my own wishes that were at stake, I might perhaps do as you suggest; but Hubbard's prospects are involved likewise."

"Have you definitely promised Mr. Hubbard that you will go to New York?"

"No."

"And you said he was in Galveston now?"

"Yes."

"Has he a good opening there?"

"Yes; but he would rather be in New York, and it is not practicable unless I join him."

"I should think it would be better for him to stay where he is than to make a change. I cannot imagine that any one can really like New York. I am sure you will be happier in Boston as soon as you get habituated to it." She had stopped rowing, and was leaning forward a little in an attitude of mournful resignation. "I will go there, if there is no other way," she said at length, looking up bravely.

"You don't know how hard it is for me to deny you anything, Mary. Perhaps — possibly —"

"I ought not to give you a wrong impression," she broke in generously. "I should force myself to be contented anywhere; only — I had set my heart on living in Boston."

Graham was deeply touched by that conscientiousness which would not let her overstep the strict limits of the truth. He was carried away by his feeling for her; and his own wishes and his friend's future and his better judgment were alike forgotten. Her words of the other afternoon came back to him, — "I like my friends to show their affection for me by actions rather than by words."

"Mary," he said impulsively, "there is another way. I will do as you wish; it is possible."

"Oh, John, how good and unselfish you are! I shall never forget this, never!"

Her face lighted up, and then softened. "*Dear* John," she said gently, "if you like, we might still be married in the autumn, even although we do not go to New York. I did think that I could n't be spared from home until the spring, but perhaps — Sit still, or you will upset the boat!" she added with a happy little smile.

## CHAPTER XII.

And on the stream whose inconstant bosom
Was prankt under boughs of embowering blossom,
With golden and green light, slanting through
Their heaven of many a tangled hue,
Broad water-lilies lay tremulously,
And starry river-buds glimmered by.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.

GRAHAM often went on some expedition before breakfast. A late breakfast, by the way, was the only point upon which both chaperones were united. These two ladies were as inimical as is possible when one of the antagonists is exceedingly well bred and has a silvery voice. Bessie was forever pouring her woes into John's ears. She could not bear Miss MacLinton and what she termed her "insufferable ways." On the other hand it was plain to see that the elder lady thought Mrs. Maxwell an impertinent little upstart. Not that she gave any sign of her feelings beyond a more scrupulous attention to what she might have to say than she accorded to any one else, accompanied by an indescribable expression of countenance. She was very fond of Mrs. Otis and Charles, and so she tolerated Bessie on their account. The rival matrons were productive of an unexpected good, however. Bessie kept Mary on her best behavior. Many a time she secretly agreed with her in her opinions concerning the Adirondacks, but she would not take her side openly. Miss MacLinton,

on the other hand, made Graham appreciate his blessings the more keenly. He liked her better as their acquaintance progressed, and yet in spite of that fact he was driven frantic by her desire to discuss serious problems and the most thought-compelling of literature at every hour of the day. He began to be thankful that he was going to marry a woman who did not care for intellectual pursuits. Miss MacLinton seemed to him to have been made of commonplace enough material in the beginning, and he could not understand the reverence that Charles Otis and the Brookses felt for her; for she was not remarkable in any way save for an innate refinement, which he thought they valued too highly. Her intellect was as little noteworthy as her person; and her acquirements and love of knowledge were as much an outside matter as her conventional and perfect dress when in the regions of civilization. He wished there were some process by which her mind could be stripped of all its artificial adornments, and that he could see her intellect arrayed in the primitive flannel garb and soft felt hat of the "woods."

Graham was invariably late to breakfast. He would appear with a string of fish or a handful of water-lilies just as the others were leaving the table, and he was always as much surprised to find that they had finished their meal as if it were the first time that he had not been prompt to the moment. On this especial morning he had planned a row to Fifth Lake. There was to be an expedition in the afternoon to Little Moose Lake to celebrate Sam's last day, for he and Thornton and Reinhart were to return to the world on the morrow.

As Graham was unfastening his boat, he heard

a light step on the grass; and as he glanced up he caught a glimpse of Janet, who was going toward the path that led to Moss Lake. She had wakened early, and grown tired of her narrow quarters; and the idea had seized her of taking a walk through the woods. As she entered the lonely trail, the early morning light was coming through the thick screen of branches in a long yellow slant. There were some red toadstools ahead of her that suggested the tables around which the fairies had held their midnight revels. The carry was so narrow that her skirt brushed the bushes on either side, which were wet with dew. Some live thing was aroused by her contact, for she heard a fluttering of wings among the branches. "Whatever you are, you need n't be in the least afraid of me," she said aloud, "for I would n't hurt you for anything in the world." The sound of her own voice gave her confidence, and she proceeded less doubtfully, clambering over moss-grown logs, and stopping to gather some feathery ferns and clusters of cornel-berries. There was something stimulating in the novelty of the situation; she had never taken a solitary walk so soon after sunrise. At length she heard a step behind her which caused her to look over her shoulder with a startled glance.

"Janet," said John, "it is only I; I did n't mean to frighten you."

"I am glad to see you," she said, her face lighting up with pleasure. "It is lonely all by one's self in this still place."

"I have come to ask you," he began, "if you would like to take a row to Fifth Lake, to get some pond-lilies. We shall have plenty of time to get back before breakfast."

"Like it, — of course I should like it!" She colored and smiled with pleasure.

It would be a new sensation to take a passenger who was so openly enthusiastic. Graham looked into her happy face, and admitted the success of his experiment. "You are really growing brown and rosy," he said.

"Yes, and I feel so well, like a different creature; and it is all owing to you. No one else felt that I needed a change. The people who care most for one never see things as clearly as those who stand at a little distance. I can never thank you enough."

"Don't let such a word be said between us," he interposed hastily; "you have done me far more good than I can ever do you." He was touched by her gratitude, and wished that he had deserved it. He could not tell her that he had selfishly made use of her needs to further his own ends. "She is a dear little thing," he reflected, "and I can't hurt her feelings by letting her suspect how little I have thought about her."

"Please don't ever class me again among the people who stand on the outside," he begged. "It is a great pleasure to me to have made a new friend," he went on, thinking how pretty she looked with her heightened color, and her rebellious wavy hair which had been ruffled by the wind. He could not get over the feeling that she was very young, almost a little girl. She often reminded him of her small niece Sally Randolph, for her pleasure was equally child-like and open. "I am glad that we are to be brother and sister," he said heartily. "You are beginning to seem like my sister already."

She was silent.

"I dare say you don't care about it," he said. "I'm sorry for you, but it can't be helped."

"Care?" and she put out her hand impulsively. "Did you think that I did n't care? All my life I have had to shut away the things I felt most. There has been no one to whom I could talk as I can to you, except Emily; and when I am with her we always have to think about the children." She was laughing and crying together. "You have made me so happy. I never had a brother, except Sam. He is the dearest fellow in the world," she added loyally, "but he is a different kind of brother."

When they reached the little wharf, John turned to Janet with the smiling look in his eyes that she liked. "Little sister," he said, "you will be very hungry before we get back, unless you eat these like a good little girl;" and he took some crackers out of his pocket. "Sit on that log, and do as you are bid."

She obeyed; and while she made her solitary meal, she watched him get the boat ready. When the last cracker had disappeared and only a snowstorm of crumbs was left to mark its memory, he helped her into the canoe, and pushed off from the shore.

The tranquil sheet of water stretched away to join its restful boundaries of green forest and low hills. At length they came to the little stream that formed the connecting link between Fourth and Fifth Lakes. It wound in and out among islands made of tangles of long grass and purple fox-ears and lily-roots, and the trees bent over it protectingly on either side. Presently they had left this too behind them, and were gliding over the surface of Fifth Lake, which was worthy of a more poetic name. Myriads of water-lilies lifted their starry heads above the surface

of the water, and at the sight of them Janet gave a cry of delight. Graham steered the canoe so that she could reach one lily after another. She pulled them up all sparkling with water, which dripped from them in a pearly shower.

"How lovely everything is!" she exclaimed. "I never was so happy in my life. How I wish Emily could see this place! I feel as if I were ten years old, for it was always one of the dreams of my childhood to have a big brother who would take me around the world in a little boat. You think that I seem about ten years old," she added as she met his glance.

"I was thinking that you must have been a very charming little girl."

"I was a very naughty little girl; at least I had that reputation. It was merely that I was misunderstood. I was so happy, and never dreamed of any trouble until mamma died," she added, lowering her voice.

"How old were you then?"

"Nine. I shall never forget — how I felt. I didn't dare to speak of it, children are so shy. The funeral was on a Sunday. I had cried myself to sleep for three nights. I tried not to cry in the daytime, for Mary said we must learn to control ourselves. She was only fourteen, but she was as superbly brave and strong as she is now. Sunday afternoon it seemed as if I could not bear my misery any longer; so I got out the Patience cards, — I knew one game, — and I locked the nursery door, and made Greta sit on the floor by me, and I tried to teach her; she was a mere baby, only six. Pretty soon Mary looked in at the window and saw me, and she told

me what a naughty girl I was, which I knew before. She said we must never play cards on Sunday, and how could we think of pleasure when mama had died!" Janet paused to steady her voice. "When I hear it said that children never realize a loss," she went on, "because they are happy over trifles, I remember that Sunday; and when I see people doing things that seem strange to me, I always think that if I could look into their hearts I might understand. I ought to make allowances for others, for I am as ready to play Patience on a Sunday, metaphorically speaking, as I ever was."

"Only now you would put up the cards."

"No, I should play the whole game through to the end."

"I don't believe it."

"Could n't we land?" she asked, with an abrupt change of subject. "I should so like to walk to the next lake if we have time. The guides, particularly Aaron, hurry one over so fast that I never feel as if I had half seen the carries."

She was destined to have this especial trail firmly impressed upon her memory. She and Graham walked across to the Sixth Lake, and then some distance along one side of it by a path which she had never taken. There was no chance for conversation, but every now and then he would look behind him to say some word of appreciation of the beauty of the wild region that they were traversing.

On one of these occasions he was alarmed to find her sitting on a fallen tree-trunk, with her hands locked tightly together, and an expression of pain on her pale face. "Janet," he demanded, "what is the matter?"

"I have turned my ankle," she confessed.

"Do you feel faint?"

She nodded. He took a small flask of brandy from his pocket, and poured some into the cup which covered one end of it. "Drink this!" he commanded. After a swallow or two the color began to come back to her face. "You must drink it all. What do you suppose your travelling companions with the black bottle would say if they could see you now?" His words had the effect that he hoped, for she smiled faintly.

She began to walk again, and went on bravely for a short distance. Then she sank down on another tree-trunk. "I am dreadfully sorry, but I shall have to wait here a few minutes," she said. They were in a most isolated part of the woods. The forest was unbroken around them save for the lake, which stretched away at their feet. In the distance were two deserted camps, and opposite them a belt of dead trees; and their fantastic branches festooned with wreathes of greenish gray moss added to the weirdness of the scene.

"It is a great cemetery of trees," said Janet. "They have all died, those poor pale things, and their ghosts have come back to revisit the earth." Suddenly from out of the very depths of the leafless forest there came a shrill mocking laugh. "What is that?" asked the girl; "that is the ghost of a laugh, and not a human sound."

"It is a loon," said Graham.

"He is laughing at our boldness in invading his territory, and at me for being punished as I have been. I feel better now; we will go on." This time she was more successful in her attempt to walk; but she still limped so much that Graham finally said, —

"There is no use in keeping on in this way any longer. I can carry you over the worst of this; it will hurt you less."

"No, indeed! Of course I can walk. I insist — no, really, please."

His only answer was to gather her up in his arms, which he did with as little effort as if she had been a child. "You must not be afraid," he said, as she continued to protest, "I shall not let you fall."

"I am not afraid. I am never afraid when I am with you;" and she looked at him with shy gratitude. "You always take such good care of everybody."

"I wish I thought so. I sometimes feel as if when there is an awkward way of doing a thing I find it."

"Indeed, you must n't think that; it is not just to yourself."

Conversation became impossible after this. Later, in looking back to that strange journey through the forest, it seemed to Janet like the beginning of a new phase in her life. Graham's careless words of friendship had glorified her horizon; she repeated them over and over to herself. There was a new beauty in the landscape. How sombre and impressive the woods were! How high and straight that pine shot up, until its top was lost in remote space, and it appeared to touch the sky; and certainly the sky was nearer one here than elsewhere. Finally they came out of the shade into the full sunlight, and saw Fifth Lake in the hollow below them, lying like a diamond in an emerald setting, — the fringe of green around it being unbroken, and the lilies dotting its surface and holding up their fragrant chalices to catch the sunlight.

"Oh," said Janet, "how wonderful it all is!"

They had reached their canoe, and Graham helped her into it, and they were soon once more drifting over the water. "You said this was a new world, and it has proved so," she went on. "I should like to live in this peaceful, indolent way forever. I shall never forget the stillness and beauty of the early morning among the lakes; there is something solemn about it. It is as if one had gone unexpectedly into a church; it ought to make it easier to be good."

"It ought; but unfortunately there is a very actual and prosaic world awaiting us. We can never stay long on the heights."

The thought of his self-dissatisfaction came like a shadow to cloud his present pleasure; for a brief space he had forgotten the weight which had been pressing upon him of late. He despised himself for having yielded to Mary for no better reason than because he was in the grip of a strong attraction, and for having failed to exert his will at an important crisis. He saw clearly, now that it was too late, that it was a selfish love which could not bear to inflict temporary pain for the sake of lasting gain. Most bitter of all was the reflection that had he given Mary any idea of the greatness of his sacrifice, she would have insisted that he should not make it. Regrets, however, were useless; his word was given, and it was too late to draw back. It was small comfort to reflect that Stephen Hubbard had an excellent opening in Galveston, and that he had not definitely agreed to go into partnership with him in New York; the tone of his friend's letters was formal and cold enough to give an added sting to Graham's uneasy conscience. His feeling for Mary was, however, so

strong as to dominate everything else when he was with her; but a growing sense of self-contempt was poisoning his hours when he was beyond the reach of her potent influence.

Mary was watching for them at the little wharf when they reached their camp, and John was made to feel his own deficiencies more keenly than ever. It certainly did seem a most foolish proceeding to take a delicate girl on an ante-breakfast excursion, which had ended in a sprained ankle, when viewed in the light of Mary's pitiless common-sense. It was almost noon when they arrived at their destination, and the steamer landed to leave the mail just in time to make a temporary diversion for their benefit.

Mary's face grew grave as she read her letter. "I shall have to go home to-morrow with Sam," she said.

"What has happened?" Janet asked. She was lying luxuriously on the couch where Mary had placed her, and trying to forget her pain, which was growing greater all the time.

"Papa is ill with pneumonia."

"How trying!" Bessie Maxwell exclaimed. "I am thankful that it is n't my husband, for he belongs to a family who have been carried off by that treacherous disease."

The water-lilies were forgotten. They lay in a corner, drooping and fading. When Janet remembered them, they were past recovery. "Poor things!" she said; "our happy day is over."

## CHAPTER XIII.

And more such days as these to us befall!
SHAKESPEARE.

MARY and Greta went home the next day with Sam and the two young men. Janet could not take the journey for some time on account of her ankle. There was no reason why the rest of the party should return, and Mary begged them to stay to cheer Janet in her enforced exile. They were all very ready to accede to her wishes with the exception of John, but she finally persuaded him that he could be of far greater use in the camp than in Kingshaven; for in truth she did not feel easy in leaving a household manned by so frail a stay as Charles Otis, who, as she observed to John, was of no more use in an emergency that required strength than a woman.

The enjoyment of the little company who remained at the Adirondacks was marred at first by anxiety concerning Mr. Brooks; but after a day or two the news became more encouraging, and then they once more grew cheerful and light-hearted. Even Mrs. Maxwell fell under the spell of the peace-giving air, and seemed to John almost like her old self. She was an excellent nurse, and took the best of care of her patient, who had never received so much attention since the world began. In pleasant weather Janet spent her days in the hammock, which over-

looked the lake, listening to Charles or John, who were both excellent readers, or joining in the discussion into which Miss MacLinton and Graham always diverged. Mrs. Maxwell interrupted with irrelevant observations, or quoted Mr. Maxwell's opinions, which gained weight with her according to the ratio of the distance which separated them. In stormy weather they stayed in the sitting-room by a huge crackling wood-fire, which lighted up the brown rafters. Every pleasant night they sat before the bonfire in front of the camp; and Janet was always the central figure in the picture, looking like a gypsy in the uncertain light which shone on her tanned face and dark hair, surmounted by the little red woollen cap. So the hours slipped quietly and happily by, until at last she was well enough to take the homeward journey.

The day before their departure Janet was in the hammock, and Charles sat near her reading aloud. At length he laid down his book, and his handsome, indolent face suddenly became animated. He thought how pretty Janet looked, leaning back tranquilly, with her eyes fixed on the water and the wavy masses of her hair ruffled by the wind. Her face had the charm which artists feel, — delicacy of line, and beauty of expression rather than of coloring. As Charles watched her, he thought how much less beautiful she was than her two handsome sisters, but how infinitely more attractive. He prided himself upon the fastidiousness of his taste; it pleased him to think that he had the fineness of perception to prefer this delicate type. Her slender figure, with its look of fragility, charmed him far more than Greta's well-rounded outlines or Mary's superb physique. Then

how fascinating she was when she smiled and her whole face lighted up and the dimples trembled at the corners of her mouth! His artistic eyes rested with pleasure on the red silk handkerchief knotted carelessly around her throat, and then wandered to her small brown left hand, which lay passive in her lap. It was ringless, and his imagination busied itself in wondering what stone would suit it best. Diamonds were too common; opals, which seemed most like her, were unlucky. He finally decided upon rubies.

"Janet," he began, "I wonder if you are as sorry as I am that these pleasant weeks are over." He had the ropes of the hammock in his hand, and lazily rocked her as he spoke.

"I am desperately sorry," she admitted. "I don't ever want to go home."

"It is n't the going home that I mind; it is the separation from you. It is doleful enough to think of not being able to get at you at any moment of the day."

"Oh, Charles!" Janet, who could never help being influenced in her judgment of persons by their treatment of her, thought that Charles was charming when he was sufficiently in earnest to be roused out of his affectations.

"Why need we be separated?" he continued in his mellow, even tones. "I think we could have a delightful life together."

The blood rushed in a flame to Janet's cheeks, and then receded; she struggled to get out of the hammock, but Charles held the two edges firmly with his gentle but determined grasp.

"Does it astonish you so much to find that you are the one woman in the world for me? Did you never guess it before?" He tried to take the hand

which lay nearest him; but she snatched it away, and raising her head, folded both hands behind it.

"It does surprise me very much; I never guessed it. You can't be serious, there have always been so many others; last winter I used to think you liked Greta —"

"Greta!" the young man interrupted impatiently. "I like her well enough to flirt with, but when it comes to a question of marrying —"

"I should be the last person who would suit you," put in Janet, quietly. "I should shock you all the time. When you get back to the world, your world, you will see things differently. Your world is not my world, — it would never do. You must not speak nor think of it again."

"But, Janet, I won't let you dismiss what I have to say in this summary fashion. I love you, and I know you can love me a little if you will only try."

"Never!" she said, with a sharp movement of pain; "all that is over for me."

"Why should it be over? I don't care in what way you love me, if you will only give yourself to me. I want your friendship, your companionship. You can't think, dear, what an easy life you would have. I would do everything to make you happy. You would live pleasantly in Boston in winter, and in Kingshaven in summer, in the midst of all your friends; and you need not have a care nor an anxiety."

Janet felt an indescribable sense of pain; some voice within her seemed struggling for utterance. She was conscious of relief, mingled with disappointment, at finding that Charles was not deeply in love with her.

"Do you mean," she asked at length, "that you

would be satisfied to have a wife who would look upon you merely as a kind friend?"

"Yes, if that wife were you. That sort of affection is much safer than your sudden, violent passions." He thought he saw some signs of yielding in her mobile face. "Look at Mary and Jack," he proceeded. "There was nothing in the least romantic about their engagement; but see how happy they are. Yet they were not violently in love at first. Mary struck Jack's fancy, and she had the sense to see that it was a good thing for her."

"He is very much in love with her," Janet said in a low voice, fingering the ropes of the hammock nervously.

"He is now, but he was n't at first. No, Janet, outside of novels there are very few men who fall desperately in love with the women they mean to marry. In choosing a wife, a man consults his judgment and his taste as well as his fancy. It is an affair of the head quite as much as of the heart; and if a woman is sensible, she looks at the matter from the same standpoint."

"It takes all the poetry and romance out of life to believe such things."

"Oh, no! That is just my point. After two persons are once engaged and 'let themselves go,' so to speak, they grow more and more in love. Try it, Janet, and see how happy we shall be. It will be one long continuation of this last delightful fortnight." He took both her hands and pressed them to his lips. "Make me happy, Janet," he pleaded; "and my mother would be so pleased too."

Mrs. Otis's name brought with it a quick rush of pleasant associations. Janet loved her almost as

much as if she had been her own mother. The idea of living under Mrs. Otis's protecting care in that dear, rambling old house was an enticing one. It caused her to waver for a moment, not in her decision, but in her expression of it. If only she could marry Mrs. Otis instead of Charles!

"Come," he urged; "you will consent, or you will at least take time to consider. I will give you all next winter, even longer, if you like."

There was something soothing to Janet in his quiet manner. It would be so easy to yield, and let her life drift on in safe and pleasant channels. She felt as if she were a poor little fly, fast being caught in the meshes of a cobweb. She pulled the hammock together, and was sure of the actual web; then she glanced at Charles, and thought that flies were not so much to be pitied when spiders took so agreeable a shape.

"No," she said at last; "I must not take time. It would be wrong for me to promise what you wish, with no stronger feeling in my heart."

"But, Janet, I shall be only too thankful and happy to get you on any conditions," said the young man. Opposition had roused all his inflexible self-will, and he was quite honest at the moment in declaring that to marry her was the chief desire of his life. "Janet, dear, you do not know how I would love you," he pleaded.

"I must go in now," she said; "please let me out. No, I insist!" as he would fain have kept her longer. "We will never speak of what has been said to-day, and then there need be no break in our friendship. Come, Charles," she concluded impatiently, "let me go!"

She was indignant with herself that she could not help feeling flattered by his half-hearted love, and still more aghast to find that the future he pictured had certain charms for her. Yet mingling with this was another feeling which she would not face. It was at once painful and beautiful. She had had a glimpse of what life might be when shared with some one who understood her, and who loved her for another reason than because she was an amusing companion. How little would she ask then, whether the outward conditions of her life were hard or easy!

She had left the hammock, and had turned to take one look at the blue lake and the hills before going into the house.

"Why, here come Jack and Aaron," said Charles; "I wonder if they have had any luck. It passes my comprehension how a humane man like Jack can find pleasure in shooting."

At the sight of Graham, Janet's heart began to beat faster. "How inexpressibly fortunate Mary is!" she thought.

## CHAPTER XIV.

We live two lives. A life of deepest thought and feeling that gets stirred but seldom, and a surface life among things and words.

MRS. A. D. T. WHITNEY.

THERE are few things more depressing than the change from pure mountain air and a free, untrammelled life, to the mental and physical atmosphere of a country town. Janet was desperately unhappy when she came back to Kingshaven. She longed for one more breath of the invigorating mountain air, and for another of those delightful talks around the bonfire. Whenever she saw John he would give her an absent-minded hand-shake and then turn eagerly to Mary, and Janet would be left with a bitter sense of her own unimportance.

One morning, about a week after her return, she and Mary were sitting on the piazza with their work. The wedding was to come off some time in December, and therefore her sister had begun on her preparations in good earnest. Janet, who excelled in all kinds of needlework, was helping her embroider some towels. Mary talked of her future plans, and Janet tried to make intelligible responses, but her thoughts flew off and included the length and breadth and depth of the universe. She could not but feel anxious with regard to Greta and Reinhart. On the previous day she had met them walking together at some distance from the town, and she was almost

sure that it was not a chance encounter. She could make no impression upon her impervious young sister, who merely observed, with a grave shake of her pretty head, that for her part she did not like the way *she* was "going on" with Charles Otis, to say nothing of John Graham.

"John is really becoming won over to the idea of the house on Commonwealth Avenue," Mary said at length. "He is sensible enough to see that if Greta is with us this winter, the neighborhood where we live will make all the difference in her pleasure."

Janet meanwhile was wondering how Greta's flirtation was to end. She had a presentiment of coming tragedy. Given a young romantic man with strong affections and equally strong passions, who was poor, and a pleasure-loving girl with an inordinate desire for admiration but an equally strong love of ease, and how could anything result but disappointment? Her inherent hopefulness suggested the possibility that Greta might grow to love Reinhart, and that this affection would bring out all that was sweetest in her character; but when she remembered her sister's flippant words of the evening before, her heart sank within her, and she felt very sorry for poor Reinhart, whom she had always liked.

"Do you know, Janet," Mary said, finally, "I don't altogether like this B; suppose we go over and look at those letters that Mrs. Otis has had stamped at Miss Rigby's before we begin on the second dozen towels."

They met Greta on the Common, who announced that John had such a bad cold that his aunt would not let him go to town. "He is very depressed," she added, with a merry laugh. "I wonder why all

men are such geese if there is anything the matter with them? I am sure he imagines that he is in the first stages of consumption."

John, wrapped up in his aunt's blanket-shawl, was not an impressive sight; and Janet could not help smiling when he inquired how she was, in a voice that croaked like a raven.

"I am very well, thank you; but I hear that you are going into a decline," she replied mischievously.

"Can't you recommend some remedy? They all have, — all the ladies who have dropped in this morning; and they are all different, — the remedies, I mean."

"If you would only take Perry Davis's Pain-killer, I know it would do you good," said his aunt; "it always helps me. Charley has a prejudice against it too."

"I don't wonder; it is so horrid," said Janet, making a little grimace as she put her arm about Mrs. Otis. "I would rather have the pain any time than its killer."

Janet delighted in Mrs. Otis's two long parlors with their peaceful order. The Morris paper and the rugs which had taken the place of the well-loved landscape-paper and mossy green carpet of Graham's boyhood, exactly suited her fastidious taste. The great bowls of nasturtiums and the dark blue pitcher full of white asters gave her eye the same pleasure, by their perfect harmony, that strains of music give to a musical ear. And Mrs. Otis herself was so charming in her black dress, with the little cobweb lace cap on her pretty fair hair, that Janet could not refrain from giving her another hug. "How pleasant it would be to marry Mrs. Otis," she thought again,

"and how fascinating to live in this dear old house!" She half wished that she had yielded to Charles's suggestion that she should take time to consider his proposition. Everything about it was so attractive except the idea of Charles himself. She had an enthusiasm for Boston and Boston people scarcely second to Mary's, and a longing for an independent life. She was conscious of social gifts which she had never had a chance to bring into play; and in addition, the thought of living on at home after Mary's marriage was an intolerable one. Her very love for her father made the idea of their dependence on each other in all practical ways, while they were in reality as far asunder as the poles, a hard one. She wished that she might grow to love Charles; she was fond of him already, and she was by no means insensible to the charm of his beauty and refinement.

While Mary was looking at the B's that were brought out for her inspection, Mrs. Otis asked Janet some questions about the Adirondacks, — a theme upon which the latter was ever eloquent.

"I never knew Charley so enthusiastic over anything. I thought the roughness would disgust him; but he declares that he never had so good a time in all his life," Mrs. Otis said.

"We will all go again next summer, and stay three months," said John, heartily.

"Good heavens! Three months of it! You won't go if you care for my society!" Mary exclaimed.

"I thought you liked it," he said, with keen disappointment in his tones.

"So I did for once, for the sake of a new experience; but I should never care to repeat it. I was there, and so I made the best of it."

"Here is the postman," said Janet; and she hurried out to intercept any letters there might be for herself or Mary.

She came back with a letter and a parcel for John. The package was rather a bulky one, and Mary became interested in it at once. "Please undo it; I want to see what it is," she begged; for John had opened his letter first.

"I don't think the contents will interest you," he observed, hastily running his eye over the two enclosures in the envelope. "My friends Mr. and Mrs. Hubbard are coming to Boston for a few days next week."

"The artist, and that little country wife of his who wrote to me when I was first engaged, and signed herself, 'Your respectful friend, Mrs. Ida Hubbard'?"

At another time John would have laughed, but his cold made him look upon the serious side of things. He felt nervous as to the reception that Mary would give his friends.

"Has Mrs. Ida sent you the parcel? Do open it; perhaps it contains a specimen of her handiwork."

Graham was more and more troubled.

"Come, give it to me!" Mary said. "I will open it. It always tries me to see the slow way in which you untie strings."

"I was brought up upon Miss Edgeworth's 'Waste not, Want not,'" said John.

"So was I; but I learned long ago that the time taken to untie knots instead of cutting them is a far greater waste than that of a paltry string or two." She cut the string, and began to undo the bundle. Graham waited with the feelings of a criminal expecting his sentence.

"Oh, it 's one of those crazy-patchwork monstrosities!" she said, unfolding it. "If there is anything that I detest, it is that kind of thing; and this one is particularly ugly. See the lavender square next to the pink one, and that little water-color sketch in the centre; I suppose that is Mr. Hubbard's contribution. And what is it? It is too small for a quilt."

"It is a table-cloth," Graham replied, in a subdued voice.

"A table-cloth! Worse and worse! How came she to make you such a thing, — and she the wife of an artist?"

"She was making it when I was in New York."

"And you admired it, I suppose?"

John nodded.

Mary groaned. "So that is a sample of the kind of work that you like! I can only hope that all your friends don't share your taste; if they do, Heaven save me from my wedding presents!"

"The daisies on the black border are very pretty," said Mrs. Otis, whose sense of humor had given way to her nephew's evident sensitiveness. "Mrs. Hubbard probably asked him if he did not think it very handsome, and he had to say 'Yes.' He has excellent taste."

Janet was unexpectedly overcome by the humor of the situation. Her laugh rang out merrily. "It is a case of potted sprats!" she exclaimed.

John could see nothing to laugh at. "Mr. Hubbard did not fancy Mrs. Hubbard's table-cloth," he observed stiffly; "and so, as I said that I liked it, she has sent it to me." He felt that he owed this explanation to the Hubbard family.

"Fancy it! I should n't think he would," Mary

said. "Come, tell me honestly, did you really think it pretty?"

Graham was divided between his love of truth and his championship for Mrs. Hubbard. The poor, pretty little Ida, with her confiding certainty that he liked her work, made a pathetic picture in his mental vision. "I think the colors are very bright and attractive," he remarked discreetly,

Mary laughed. "It is a good but very inconvenient lesson to you for pretending that you admired what you really disliked," she said.

"But it is rather hard on Mary," Janet could not refrain from adding, "for she is not particularly in need of that lesson. I hope you won't feel obliged to put the table-cloth on the parlor table."

Poor John was sore at heart at the prospect which this episode called up. He had been so anxious that Mary and his old friend should like each other, but their meeting now seemed fraught with uncertainty. The table-cloth rose between them, — a whimsical but an effectual barrier.

When John was brought face to face with the Hubbards, he realized forcibly how entirely his point of view had changed in the last few months. It was not so much what Hubbard said that made him aware of this fact — for on the whole he was merciful — as what he left unsaid. Certain topics were no longer broached between them. George did not remind him of the time when he was so certain that his increased fortune would make no material difference in his way of life, or of his conscientious wish to set an example of simplicity to others less fortunate than himself; and when Graham pointed out a vacant house on Commonwealth Avenue that he thought of taking,

Hubbard merely said with exaggerated enthusiasm that he had always delighted in that quarter of the city.

John did not ask Mary to call upon Mrs. Hubbard, for which forbearance she was grateful. Nevertheless, she was destined to see her; for Emily, unconscious of the foregoing complications, asked her and Janet to dinner, to meet "an old friend of Sam's, George Hubbard, and his wife."

On the evening of the dinner-party Graham was the first guest to arrive. People with no sense of time are occasionally unpunctually early instead of unpunctually late. Emily was putting the finishing touches to the parlor when he entered it, but in spite of this fact her manner suggested that it was very good of him to have come so early. Janet and Mary came presently; and a little later the Hubbards appeared upon the scene, followed by Charles Otis, in faultless evening attire. He surveyed the company critically, and decided that black lace was more becoming to Janet than anything else, and that Mrs. Hubbard would be rather pretty if it were not for her frightful bang. Meanwhile the little Ida was giving her hand to Mrs. Randolph shyly, and looking with an expression of infinite relief into her kind eyes. All true, simple people liked Emily at once.

Presently they all went down to dinner, and John found himself next to Mrs. Hubbard. Sam, who also enjoyed the pleasure of being her neighbor, was already making her laugh. "Are you artistic, Mrs. Hubbard?" he inquired. "Heaven grant that you are not, because if you are, we can never be friends."

"But you are friends with my husband," said Ida, archly. She was beginning to revive in this genial

atmosphere, and was devoutly thankful that the terrifying Miss Brooks was at the farther corner of the table.

"Yes," responded Sam; "but you must remember that I knew him before he became addicted to art and tried to rival Botticelli in his chiaroscuro. I shall never forget my disappointment when I first visited him in his studio, Mrs. Hubbard. I had expected the old brotherly greeting. He was standing before an easel, contemplating a small oil-sketch; for the life of me, I could n't tell whether it was a thunderstorm in the mountains or an angry sea. 'Hullo, old fellow!' he exclaimed; 'I am delighted to see you, for you can tell me if my sketch is sincere, and whether the high value is right.' I thought he valued it too highly, but I did n't mention it."

After a little more on the same subject, and some laughing protests on the part of Mr. Hubbard, who declared that Randolph's tales were pure inventions, Sam said, for the benefit of the rest of the table, that he and Mrs. Hubbard had just discovered that they had "a mutual distrust of art." "We are going to ratify this bond by swearing an eternal friendship," he added, taking Ida's hand in his, and shaking it with mock solemnity. Mary was talking to Charles, so she could not hear what was going on; but she wished for the thousandth time that her brother-in-law would conduct himself like other people. She was on the rack throughout dinner. Why had Emily given them black-bean soup, and why did she spoil her ducks by having them cooked too much? Would her sister never give up her old-fashioned way of having all the vegetables on the table? Mary would not have felt so annoyed if the critical Charles had

not been by her side; but she knew how he must be inwardly commenting on every detail of her sister's housekeeping. Emily, meanwhile, was tranquilly discussing the Impressionists with Mr. Hubbard, quite oblivious of any mere sublunary impressions.

Mary gave a sigh of relief when the dinner was over. She had a mixture of sentiments whenever she dined formally with her sister, — despair at the impossibility of making her alive to the importance of conventional details, and thankfulness that matters had been no worse. Some unexceptionable ice-cream had in part restored her equanimity, and she seated herself in the parlor by Mrs. Hubbard's side full of benevolent impulses. "Mrs. Ida" was evidently an ordinary little thing; but she was the wife of John's old friend, and her quick eye had taken the measure of George and found him interesting.

"Do you like Boston?" Mary began. There was a patronizing quality in her tone, of which she was wholly unaware.

"Yes, 'm," Mrs. Hubbard said meekly.

"I suppose Mr. Graham has shown you the historical buildings of the city? He has a fancy for all sorts of out-of-the-way places."

"Yes, 'm." Ida had grown very red; it was so terrifying to talk to this handsome, self-possessed young lady.

"What have you enjoyed most of all?" Mary continued, with an attempt at kindly interest which wholly failed.

"The sea."

"Ah! Where did you go, — to Beverly or Swampscott?"

"No; to City Point one day, and to Revere Beach

another time. I liked that best; it's a real pretty place. We picked up stones on the beach."

"Merciful heavens!" Mary thought; "what possessed John to take them to that rowdy picnic place? — You should see the real ocean," she said.

"We only had a little bit of time; we had been seeing other things all day, so we just went out there for a little while. We had a real nice time at City Point too. There was a queer little restaurant, and a pleasant man let us sit there and look at the water, and we all had some soda-water afterwards." Ida was impelled to make these revelations by the imperative necessity which she felt for saying something. She must not let "Mr. Graham's lady" think her too shy to speak. "I suppose you go so often to City Point, Miss Brooks, that it is no novelty to you," she added.

"No; I have never been there. There are much prettier places near Kingshaven." Mary was trying to picture to herself the group as they must have looked on that piazza at City Point. It was extraordinary to her that a man of John's refinement should enjoy going to such places.

"I had a milk-shake for the first time," Mrs. Hubbard proceeded, feeling desperately that the conversation must be sustained. "Have you ever tried a milk-shake, Miss Brooks?"

"No; I never have."

"Well, I don't advise you to; it's quite horrid."

"She is insufferable," thought Mary. "How came that attractive man to marry her!"

"Mr. Graham has been so kind since we've been here!" said Ida, with effusion. "He has done everything for us."

"Yes?" said Mary.

Meanwhile Janet was having a talk with Mr. Hubbard. It was a long time since she had known the intoxicating sensation of fascinating her auditor, and the consciousness of his admiration affected her like a stimulant. She had the satisfaction of having first Sam and then Charles join the group. At last she noticed that a silence had fallen between her sister and Mrs. Hubbard, and she rose with compunction and hastened over to them to change places with Mary. A deep color still glowed in Ida's cheeks; she looked frightened and pathetic. It was evident that the poor child had failed utterly in making an agreeable impression.

"I wonder if you felt as much afraid of seeing us as I did of seeing you?" Janet began.

"Are you ever frightened?" Ida asked in astonishment.

"Horribly; I am sometimes so shy that I can hardly be decently civil to people."

"So am I."

"It is dreadful to be shy, is it not?" Janet said; and in the comparison of their feelings they became friends at once.

"I was so afraid of Mr. Graham when I first met him," Ida confided to Janet. "I'm not a bit afraid of him now."

"I can't imagine being afraid of Mr. Graham; and yet, now I think of it, I remember that I found him difficult to talk with before he was engaged to Mary."

"Isn't he nice?" questioned Ida, with enthusiasm. "He is the very best man in the world next to George, and he has done so much for us! Was

you acquainted with him before he came into his fortune?"

"No; we have known him only about six months."

"Well, you know he used to be poor; and George says he thinks it is wonderful how little he seems to care about his money, excepting he does so much for all his friends;" and Ida related his kindness to them, winding up with a detailed description of each piece of furniture which they had bought with his money. "You know," she went on, "Mr. Graham's mother died when he was only nine years old; that was when they lived in Charles Street."

Janet saw Graham as a lonely little boy playing in Charles Street with his sister Edith.

"And his father died just before he left college. George says Mr. Graham has had a real sad time; he says if ever a man deserved to be happy, it's John Graham."

Janet was conscious of a strong desire to hear more; and as Mrs. Hubbard proceeded with her story, she was full of passionate sympathy with the hero.

"Everything seemed to be against him; he had such a good place, — doing some kind of engineering, I forget whether it was water-works or a railroad. Seems to me it was in Michigan, but perhaps it was Dakota, — I never can keep those Western places straight; but he had to give it up and go to southern California, where he didn't have half so good pay, because the climate suited his sister better."

"Oh!" sighed Janet, clasping her hands tightly together.

"It wasn't as if he had had a rest; he worked

just as hard all the time. It was consumption, you know, that his sister died of. He did everything for her. He used up the little money his father left them, trying to make her well. They went to different places, and had ever so many doctors, but it did n't do any good. He was perfectly devoted to her. George always said the woman who got John Graham would be a lucky girl. Well, she died, — Miss Graham, I mean. If he had only had his fortune earlier, perhaps his sister would n't have died; and when it did come to him in that very unexpected way, he told George there seemed no use in it so long as Edith was n't here to enjoy it too. I think it is very hard to understand the ways of Providence, don't you, Miss Brooks?"

"Very!" said Janet emphatically, hastily brushing her hand across her eyes.

"George said it was unfortunate that he had to give up that first good place I was alluding to. He says he ought to have let somebody else take care of his sister, instead of spoiling all his chances; but of course when he began, he did n't know it would be for so long, and there did n't seem to be anybody else." Mrs. Hubbard paused; her attention had been caught by Sam Randolph. "What *is* he doing? Why is he swinging from side to side in that queer way, and jumping up and down on his chair?"

"He must be describing our journey into the Adirondacks." Janet was impatient of this interruption, and was all eagerness to get the conversation back into its former channel.

"Let 's go over and listen to him, Miss Brooks. He 's so funny, I like him so much."

Janet was in despair. "In one minute; but I

want first to know what happened after — when Mr. Graham's sister died."

"She was buried at Forest Hills Cemetery. They had a family lot there, and Mr. Graham came on with the body. I think Forest Hills is a beautiful place, don't you?"

"Yes; but what did Mr. Graham do afterwards?"

"He went back again."

"Back again? Where do you mean?"

"Where he came from, — where his sister died. I never can remember the names of those Western places. I think it was Colorado, but it may have been Texas."

Janet would have liked to shake the pretty Ida.

"George was quite surprised to find he is going to live in Boston. Mr. Graham gave us to understand that he was coming to New York next winter. He likes New York so much better. May we go over to hear Mr. Randolph now?" she added with humble entreaty.

Janet's heart smote her for her selfishness. "Indeed you may," she responded heartily.

"Won't you come too, please?" Ida begged, with the little deferential manner that in connection with her beauty was so captivating.

"Of course I will. — She is a dear little thing after all," thought Janet, "and I don't wonder that Mr. Hubbard fell in love with her, and threw considerations of grammar to the winds."

The company broke up early, for there was a black cloud in the west which threatened a thunderstorm and made Mary uneasy. In the cars she and Janet had seats together.

"Did you know," Janet began, all alive with the

interest of her discovery, "that John gave up his own advancement for the sake of taking care of his sister?"

"Yes; it would have been much better if he had sent her South with some friend, and then he could have been earning more money with which to make her comfortable in the future. It was a useless piece of sacrifice. I have no patience with useless sacrifice; it means a morbid streak somewhere. It was a sheer piece of luck, John's getting this fortune; without it what would he have been? Nothing but a poor struggling engineer."

"Mrs. Hubbard said that John likes New York a great deal better than Boston," Janet said. "I wonder why he decided to live here?"

"To please me," Mary owned, forced to this acknowledgment by her imperative truthfulness.

"You don't consider that a useless piece of sacrifice, I suppose?" Janet flashed out, with an asperity that surprised her sister.

"My dear, John must like Boston a great deal better than New York as soon as he gets used to it; it is so infinitely superior. *It can never be a sacrifice to live in Boston.*"

## CHAPTER XV.

That 's the way with girls. I do believe that most of them . . . never think of marriage as the end of their flirtations. They 'd just like the attentions and the romance to go on forever, and never turn into anything more serious.

WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS.

ON the evening of the dinner-party, when Mary opened the parlor door upon her return to Kingshaven, she uttered an exclamation of displeased surprise. Greta and Reinhart were sitting by the table with their heads bent over some letters. She turned scarlet at the unexpected sight of her sister; and he rose in confusion, dropping some of the notes that lay in his lap. He was oblivious to this fact in his embarrassment, and as he and Mary exchanged formal greetings, she stooped to pick them up.

Greta sprang forward and seized one. "No, no, you must not, you shall not read it," she cried.

Mary glanced at the writing and saw that it was Greta's; whereupon she quietly unfolded it and read it through. It ran as follows: —

DEAR MR. REINHART, — Mary and Janet are to be away all the evening, and so I shall have a very solitary time after papa has gone upstairs, which he does by eight o'clock. I remember that it is your day for giving lessons in Kingshaven. It seems a long time since I have seen you. I did not mean to vex you so the other day, and I hope you

understood how it happened. I can't think why Mary disapproves of our friendship, but I don't care. I am not going to be a slave to her all my life!

Sincerely yours,

MARGARET K. BROOKS.

There was a profound silence while Mary was reading this note, and then she asked in a low tone which struck a chill to Greta's heart, "How long has this been going on?"

Greta gazed at her piteously; but finding that she remained unmoved, her spirit was roused. "It is your own fault!" she cried passionately. "If you had n't been so severe with me, if you had n't been so rude to him at the Adirondacks, I would have been more open with you. I cannot give up my friends at your pleasure; and if you disapprove of my seeing them, I am sorry, but — No, I am *not* sorry; it is you who ought to be sorry."

Mary shrugged her shoulders, and turned away with careless contempt. "Mr. Reinhart," she said coldly, "perhaps, as my sister is too excited to be rational, you will be so kind as to explain the situation to me, and tell me how you reconcile it to your conscience, as a man of honor, to carry on an underhanded flirtation with —"

"The situation is this, Miss Brooks," he broke in impetuously. "I love your sister; to-night I came to ask her to marry me."

Mary had her father's constitutional dread of anything that approached the sensational, and the dramatic touch which her foreign acquaintance gave to a scene by his mere presence was distasteful to her. She looked at his flashing eyes and moody face with ill-concealed irritation, and thought him unbal-

anced and extreme, even in his appearance. "I was not aware that you were in a position to think of marriage," she said, with a cold transition to the commonplace.

"But of late — just now — in those letters; I have had such good fortune, Miss Brooks," the poor fellow said eagerly; and as he spoke, he held out the documents in question for her inspection. Mary read the letters, and listened to his explanations with gathering impatience. It was vexatious that she could not dispose of him as easily as she had anticipated. Carl Reinhart hopelessly poor would have been a far simpler problem to deal with, as in that case she could easily have persuaded her sister that an engagement with him would be the height of folly. His present good fortune, over which he was so elated, she knew only too well was a less conspicuous poverty. The brilliant prospects which were opening before him were new music-scholars and an organ to play if he stayed in the East, or a position in a conservatory if he went to the West. Mary would have pitied his ingenuous simplicity had he been in love with another woman's sister.

Greta, meanwhile, was listening to the conversation with a burning sense of shame. She was indignant that her poor little romance had been dragged forth by desecrating hands, and held up to the glaring light of day. Why was it not possible to carry it on in peace and seclusion? It was degrading to sit by while her affairs were talked over as if she were a mere child, and terribly prosaic that Carl Reinhart should be forced to explain the exact state of his income. She must end the scene in some way; it was like a long nightmare. She rose with dignity. "I

will bid you good-evening, Mr. Reinhart. When you and my sister have come to an amicable agreement concerning my future, perhaps you will have the kindness to notify me, as your plans may not wholly coincide with mine." Her head was high in the air, and she swept out of the room with the mien of a tragedy queen.

"Miss Greta —" Reinhart pleaded in distressed tones, but she did not once look back.

Janet, who was eagerly awaiting developments upstairs, rushed out and waylaid her sister, who replied to her anxious inquiries that Mary was much better qualified to answer them, since Carl Reinhart was at present making love by proxy.

"Greta," said Janet, shyly, "if you decide to — to do it, you know you will have my sympathy."

"Hang your sympathy! I don't want any sympathy; I only want to be left in peace."

Janet hesitated; she was evidently on the verge of some counsel.

"Good-night!" and Greta brushed past her. "Don't look as if you had lost your last friend. There is one thing you can do for me, and that is to ask Mary to appoint an hour when I can see Carl; and if a time can be found when the entire family are not swarming in and out of the parlor, it will be more conducive."

She locked her door before Janet could reply. Mary came upstairs presently, and insisted upon being let in. There was no use in arguing the point, as she had determination enough to besiege the citadel until she obtained access to it, if it took the whole night. She surprised Greta by her gentleness and kindness. She took the ground that her sister had

been to blame, but that it was not too late to avert the consequences of her thoughtless conduct. She pleaded her case with the logic of a lawyer. She rehearsed the perils of a long engagement, and she proved conclusively the impossibility of a marriage between the two young people at an early date.

"But I don't want to marry him," Greta said petulantly; "all I want is to keep him for a friend."

"My dear, it is only fair to him to give him a final and unequivocal refusal. If he goes to St. Louis and is out of reach of you, he will soon get over his present fancy; men always recover from such things with surprising celerity."

Poor Greta felt that if she were allowed to manage her affairs without intervention, she could in time succeed in making Reinhart see the advantages of a friendship. It would be very forlorn if he were to go to St. Louis. Mary had no right to demand that she should give up all further acquaintance with him, or else engage herself to him; she did not wish to do either.

"My dear, you have seen very few men," Mary said. "You will find that the world contains a vast number of them who are infinitely more attractive than Carl Reinhart." She then painted the brilliant winter that awaited Greta in society in case she gave her lover his dismissal, and told her how disappointed both she and John would be if she did not come to them for the next six months, as they had planned. "Of course you can decide this matter as you like," she went on; "only the decision, in case you give him up, must be final. As I have said, I do not feel that you are suited to each other. You remember that when Janet was engaged I predicted from the

very first that it would not prove a success. If Alfred had lived, she would have been profoundly unhappy. I do not make mistakes in my judgments of character."

Sense and reason were pitilessly on Mary's side; then too the vivid description which she gave of a winter in Boston was not without its fascination. It was impossible that Greta should not be influenced by her; and yet a pair of reproachful eyes obtruded themselves persistently into her horizon.

When Greta's interview with her lover finally came off, she entered the parlor with her old nonchalant air. "I am here, Mr. Reinhart, all ready to be interviewed," she said with desperate lightness. She had put on the pale blue dress that he liked, and the firelight fell on her rosy face and touched her fair hair. She was almost within reach of his hand, and yet she had never seemed more provokingly elusive. "The family have kindly betaken themselves to remote corners of the house," she proceeded; "they all know what is going on, which makes the situation deeply romantic."

"I find it romantic enough," the poor fellow said hurriedly.

A few moments later the front door shut with a slam, and Greta came to tell Mary that she had the best of news for her. "I have refused him, as you bade me," she said bitterly.

The days which followed were long ones to all the sisters. Mary watched Greta with a heavy heart; but she consoled herself by thinking that the poor child's pain was only temporary, and that a winter of dancing-parties would be a panacea for all her woes. Her thoughts did not travel so far as to include

Reinhart in her sympathy, for she could not believe in the strength of the affection of those persons who were not to her taste. Janet, on the contrary, was unhappy on Reinhart's account also. At the end of the fifth wretched day she felt impelled to try once more to make an impression upon Greta. She found her lying on the hearth-rug before the parlor fire, with her head propped on one hand and a novel in the other.

Janet had a constitutional dread of making herself disagreeable, joined to an unconquerable reserve; so it was only by a heroic effort that she forced herself to speak. "You ought not to read by this light," she began prosaically. "You can't deny that you have eyes, if you don't own to a heart." She seated herself on the hearth-rug by her sister's side, and glanced over her shoulder to see what she was reading.

"It 's horrid;" and Greta shut the volume with a slam. "I have no patience with authors who make novels end badly; they ought to be hung."

"Such endings are true to life, however."

"That is all the more reason why books should end well. We have enough, in all conscience, that 's dismal in life, without adding to the general gloom by depressing stories."

"I met John to-day, and he said that Carl Reinhart is to start for St. Louis to-morrow," Janet observed irrelevantly.

"Did he say anything else about him?" Greta demanded eagerly. "I hope that he is well and cheerful, and that he has been enjoying life in the last few days."

"You do care for him; I knew you did. Send for him to come and see you."

Greta grew more and more astonished. "Do you mean that you, with your strict ideas, think that it would be fair toward Mary for me to proceed on that plan? It would be more underhanded than even I ever dreamed of being."

"I cannot help it," said Janet, desperately. "If you care for him, you must not let him go away without a word of comfort; it is cruel. This is your affair, and no one ought to take the responsibility of deciding for you. The question is, Do you love Carl Reinhart well enough to give up other things for his sake, or do you not? If you don't, I have nothing more to say; but if you do, think, Greta, what it will be to go into society next winter with your heart somewhere else. You would 'get over it' after a fashion, and enjoy the admiration and success; but that is a poor thing compared with the other. I suppose Mary would say that I am absurdly romantic and unpractical; but the caring for some one more than for one's self seems to me the best thing in life, — there is nothing else like it." She spoke in a low tone, with her eyes cast down, and her color coming and going.

"It is too late," Greta faltered; "I have decided."

"It will be too late soon, but there is time still."

"I dare say he does n't care so very much," Greta observed, with a little tremor in her voice. "Mary says that men get over such things with surprising ease. Did John say — what did John say?"

"He said that poor Reinhart was a good deal cut up; and then he said quite sternly that he wished girls could ever be made to realize the harm they do by their flirtations, and he wished you had cared either a little more or a little less for him; and he

ended by saying that it was a great misfortune that you had played with him as you had."

"That was a nice, sympathetic speech to make."

"He is thoroughly in sympathy with Reinhart. He spoke of him most warmly. He has seen him constantly of late, and he thinks him full of talent and very lovable."

"Don't, Janet! Do you suppose I have n't discovered that he is lovable? But it is out of the question; that is what Mary says. We should be so poor, and we should get tired of each other, and — and — "

Janet put her arm about her sister, who was struggling with her tears. She rapidly drew a picture of Greta's future in case she married Reinhart, and it differed in several of its features from Mary's sketch. "I don't deny that you would have a hard time in some ways," she ended by saying, "but you would be happy, — you don't know how happy, for you love him, I can feel that you do. You did not realize it when you saw him last. Write to him and tell him so."

"I can't, Janet; how can I? You don't know all the things I said; you don't know how angry he was. I think he has lost all faith in me," she added, with a pathetic little break in her voice. "Nothing I do or say now can make any difference. Oh, Janet, I am so miserable," she moaned. "Why are people made to care so much, and yet not given the sense to know it at the right time? It would do no good if I were to write now, he is so angry."

"I will go in and see him," Janet said impulsively.

"You, Janet? Why, but would you like to do it?"

"Like to do it!" and Janet gave a little groan. "It is not exactly what I should choose, but I

will do anything to see if I cannot straighten things out."

It did not take Greta long to recover her usual playful manner. "I wonder if it would be possible for me to love Carl as intensely as Mary loves John," she mused. "Think of her thoughtful devotion in giving him a birthday surprise-party, in spite of the well-known fact that he hates parties. She believes in doing to others as she would have them do to her."

"John will like the party; he likes everything that Mary does, and I don't wonder. The world is an easy place for her, she is so well equipped mentally and physically."

Mary came in at this moment, with the announcement that she had at last received answers to all her notes of invitation.

"Fifty out of sixty-five are acceptances," she said. "That is a larger proportion than I had calculated upon. I don't see why people will wait until the last instant before answering an invitation. I shall have to order two more quarts of ice-cream. Don't breathe a word to John about the party! I want it a complete surprise."

## CHAPTER XVI.

When strength shall fail me, then I 'll cease to strive.
SOPHOCLES.

JANET made her way to the Kingshaven station the next morning in the teeth of a northeast storm. Her invalid habits had given her a strong physical dread of encountering the rain. To-day, however, after she had once made the fatal plunge, something of her old childish love of adventure seized her. Mind triumphed over matter, and she had an almost fierce delight in battling with the elements. Everything indoors looked cramped and stunted, while outside there was freedom, life, movement. She felt as if she had broken the fetters that had held her captive for years; for once she was asserting her independent judgment.

It was still raining hard when the train reached Boston. She was happier than she had been for weeks as she made her way through the crowded streets; as she crossed the Common, her exhilaration increased to its highest pitch. "This is really living," she thought. She paused, and filled her lungs with a long breath of the pure air. How salt it was! It brought with it a hundred suggestions of the sea. Then she looked with a thrill of intense delight at the misty trees that were full of a strange beauty in the gray light. Her pulses vibrated in sympathy

with it all, and she caught in turn the spirit of the wind and the sea, and of the trees that swayed their dark branches back and forth.

By the time she had reached Hancock Street all her fears in regard to her interview with Reinhart had subsided, and she pulled the bell of his boarding-house with a feeling that she was equal to any emergency. A forlorn-looking woman, with her hair in curl-papers and a dirty apron over her soiled brown dress, came to the door. To Janet's question she replied that Mr. Reinhart had gone out an hour before, and she did not know when he would return. "He will be sure to be back before the evening," she added cheerfully, "for he 's going to St. Louis to-night, and he ain't all packed up. It 's eleven o'clock now; won't you walk in? I'll be pleased to have you stop." She opened the door into a dreary parlor, where a girl with a quantity of frizzled hair and an inane giggle was entertaining a stout young man. Janet drew back; she could not wait in that dismal place for several hours. She felt helpless and bitterly disappointed. "Have you no idea where Mr. Reinhart has gone?" she asked.

"Yes; I remember now, he told me if any gentleman come to see him, that I was to say he had gone to Mr. Graham's rooms. I forget where they are."

"I know, thank you; I will try to find him there."

At Charles Street Janet met with discouraging intelligence. Mr. Reinhart had been there earlier in the day, but finding that his friend was not at home, he had not waited. She had a reaction of spirits, and realized for the first time that she was cold and wet. She must keep on, however, like the "Wandering Jew;" there was no haven of rest for her. She

decided to go to a restaurant for her lunch, although it was still early, and then return to the charge before Reinhart's lunch-time.

When she reached Hancock Street again, she found that her elusive acquaintance had been in and gone out again. His landlady had forgotten to tell him that she had called to see him, and she held out only slender hopes of his return, for he was "packed up." She believed, after all, that he was to leave for St. Louis on the afternoon train; but whether by the Boston and Albany Road or the Hoosac Tunnel route she could not say. Janet was in despair. She hastily scribbled a message for him in case he should come back, and felt hot and uncomfortable as she met the woman's glance of sympathy.

She walked aimlessly up Beacon Street with the faint hope that she might encounter Reinhart. Her strength was fast giving out. When she came to the Athenæum she was so tired that she decided to take refuge beneath its friendly shelter. As she was opening the outer door she chanced to turn her head, and saw John Graham in the distance. "Everything will be right now," she thought, as she eagerly rushed after him.

"Janet," he said in surprise, "why are you in town on such a frightful day? No; I won't listen to a word that you have to say until you are under shelter. Take my arm; you are completely used up."

She would not go beyond the vestibule of the Athenæum. "We can't talk inside," she said, sinking down on one of the broad steps of the staircase.

"Now you may tell me what has brought you out in such a fearful storm."

When she had explained her errand, John shook his head decisively. "It will not do; you are a very generous partisan, but it is of no use."

Janet gave him an appealing glance. She was so in the habit of considering his judgment as final that at first she had only an overwhelming sense of failure; but the recollection of the sudden softening of Greta's face the evening before gave her so keen a pang that she gathered fresh courage. "John," she faltered, "you don't understand Greta."

"Janet, it is you who can't understand Greta. It would be impossible for you, with your depth of feeling, to do as she has done. Believe me that to bring those two together once more would be to prepare greater pain for Reinhart in the end. It is impossible for a girl of Greta's nature to love with an enduring affection."

"John, you know very little about girls, and nothing about Greta. You do not believe in her; I do. As I am to have no encouragement from you, I won't detain you any longer. All I ask is that you will tell me the train that Carl Reinhart is to take."

She looked very lovely and sweet as she glanced up at him; he was sorry that so much faith and energy was wasted on so poor a cause. He took a turn up and down the entrance-way before he spoke. "I don't want to tell you the train," he said at last. "Don't you see that Greta's feeling is merely a passing sense of loneliness? She will be happy enough next winter. A girl who could deliberately choose a winter in society —"

"She did not deliberately choose," broke in Janet, with vehemence equal to his own. "Mary chose for her. She acted as she thought for Greta's good, but

she was mistaken; when a thing has gone so far, it is wisest not to interfere."

"Mary influenced Greta as she did because she knew her character," he said with increasing heat; "she would have given different advice had Greta been a different girl. She has shown her calibre in the underhanded way in which she has carried on her intercourse with Reinhart, defying Mary at every point, — and this, not because she cared for him, but simply for amusement."

"I don't justify Greta, but I know that she loves Carl Reinhart, and I do so want them to be happy. Mary is not sure of Reinhart; that is why she feels so strongly."

"I am sure of him."

"Mary thinks that Greta could n't bear to be poor, but she does n't know her as I do. She would be happy in any conditions with the man she loved; and if she is made to give him up, how can it help but do her harm?"

"We have talked long enough on this subject," John said conclusively. "We cannot either of us change our minds; but you must give up your quixotic undertaking, and come back to Kingshaven with me. I will get a carriage for you."

"No," she said wearily, "I can't go back with you, I must keep on. You have the right to withhold your knowledge of Mr. Reinhart's plans from me, but you have no right to force me to relinquish mine;" and she broke away from his detaining grasp.

"I am sorry —"

"I don't want pity, but help. It was kind of you to suggest getting a carriage, and I should like one;

but it is only fair to tell you that I shall use it as I choose when it comes. I cannot always do what other people think best for me. I am not a child; I have ideas of my own, and as much a right to my independent judgment as you and Mary have to yours."

"What a frail little thing you are!" said Graham, with an indulgent smile. "Suppose I should refuse to help you, what would you do?"

"There would be some way," she said with the confidence of despair.

He could not but admire her pluck, even although it obliged him to change his preconceived idea of her in a way that was most confusing.

"I must go," Janet said hastily; for two gentlemen were coming in at the door, who eyed her and her companion curiously.

"Wait here until the carriage comes," Graham said. "Reinhart is going from the Fitchburg station on the three o'clock train. I wish I could hunt him up for you, but I can't; I have been unexpectedly summoned to New York, and have only time to go to Kingshaven, before I start."

Something in his manner made her uneasy. "Why are you going to New York?" she asked.

"I have had very sad news."

"I am so sorry," Janet murmured, vaguely expectant of she knew not what.

"My friend George Hubbard is in great trouble; his wife has died."

"It can't be true; it is too terrible. They were so happy. How can he bear it? I am glad you are going to stay with him, but I can't make it seem true, — that dear little thing, who was so devoted to him."

When Graham put Janet into the carriage, he said that he could almost find it in his heart to wish her success. She turned a tearful face to his, and gave him a silent pressure of the hand.

"You must n't take other people's troubles so much to heart," he said.

It was not a long distance to the station, but it seemed to Janet interminable, and she felt that she had lived half a lifetime during that brief journey through the crowded streets. The shock of John's news had brought her face to face with the gravest problems. The commonplace, familiar sights around her seemed unreal. "Reality is the unseen," she thought; "everything else is the shell. Some people never get below this outside: Mary, for instance, — how much does she know of life?" Her enthusiasm for this sister was so great that it was difficult for her to acknowledge that she had her faults. Even now she called them limitations, — the limitations of a strong nature. "Life," she reflected, "is not an easy matter at the best; with only one thing sure in it, and that thing death. It is only possible when we are living for the realities, and not the shadows, from day to day." Then she thought how little happiness there was, and how much easier it was to live when one was happy. She was glad that Mrs. Hubbard had been happy, and felt that death would not seem hard if one could have such happiness first for a little time. Greta and Carl would have it if she did not fail in her undertaking. John could not know what a glad thing life would be to them; he and Mary did not know anything about it. Did they care for such different things that there could never be any true fusion between them? she asked herself.

Even if a man and woman were sincerely attached to each other, would not the fact that their views of life were utterly dissimilar, and that all their tastes and inclinations were at variance, tell in the course of years? It must indeed be a strong and enduring love on both sides that could bear such a test. It could not be that she was witnessing the beginning of one of those dreary tragedies covered by the word "incompatibility." It was impossible. Mary would love John after a time as intensely as he loved her; she could not help it. Her desultory thoughts next turned to Greta. "John cannot understand her. He does not realize that a capacity for flirtation means quick sympathy, adaptability, and warm affections, in fact, all the things that make a man most happy in a wife; and he had a cold way of talking to me, as if he included me in that vast class of undesirable beings known as young girls." Some of the ideas that passed through her troubled mind were of a kind that made her feel as if she were losing control over herself. It was a relief to descend at the station and tread the substantial earth once more. She would think of matter-of-fact concerns. She would dry her waterproof, and read the "Century" until Reinhart came.

When she was somewhat rested she constructed a charming scene, throughout which she was graceful and self-possessed, and he shy at first, but finally expansive.

The hands on the great clock fairly crawled. What if she should miss him, after all? She devoutly hoped that he would not be in one of his silent moods. What should she do if he proved unresponsive? What could she do if he were too angry

with Greta to feel any joy at her relenting? There he was at last!

An unexpected fit of shyness seized Janet. She forgot every word of her carefully prepared speech. Reinhart stood before her with folded arms, and a face as blank of expression as a freshly washed slate.

"I — I came to tell you about Greta," she stammered, plunging awkwardly into the subject which she had meant to reach by delicate approaches.

"Is she ill?" he asked with quick concern.

"No, she is very well."

"I am glad to hear it," he said stiffly.

The situation was becoming more and more impossible. "Do you think hardly of Greta for what she has done?" Janet finally demanded desperately.

He hesitated. "No," he said defiantly; "I have no doubt that it is all for the best."

"Then I have nothing more to say." She rose, but feeling a sudden giddiness, put out her hand blindly for some support. Reinhart caught it.

"It is nothing," she said faintly. "I am a little tired, I believe; I have been out a long time in the rain."

Reinhart was instantly melted. "It was angelic of you to come in to see me," he said penitently. "I wanted to say good-by to you, but I could not go to your house again."

"Yes, I understand. I came in," she began nervously, "because I wished you to know just how it is with Greta. I thought perhaps you might think her heartless, whereas, in fact, it was Mary's influence that made her decide as she did. Had she been left to herself — *do* you understand?"

"You don't mean to say that you think she cares for me?" he asked breathlessly.

Janet was restored to self-possession by his agitation. She smiled in her old, playful way. "If she does," she inquired, — "supposing she does, should you still believe everything for the best as it is?"

## CHAPTER XVII.

The source of tragedy is found in the collision of two wills. . . . It has been said that the genius of the Greek tragedy is fate, the power superior to men and gods alike, and that the genius of modern tragedy is character.

ATLANTIC MONTHLY.

AFTER leaving Janet, John went to Kingshaven. He was full of his sad tidings, and longing for Mary's sympathy. He had to wait for her for some moments. When she came at last she begged that he would not keep her longer than was necessary, as she was very busy. She did not notice the sadness in his face, and supposed his errand was a trivial one.

"I shall have to detain you for some little time," he said gravely. "You must either sit here quietly, or let me go where you are at work."

"Very well; but I must speak to Hannah first." She came back presently with a towel in her hand, and seating herself near John, began diligently to embroider a B. She looked so sunny and contented, as she drew her needle in and out of her work, that he was full of gratitude for his happiness, and realized his friend's loss the more keenly. He told her briefly what had happened.

"Oh, how sad!" she exclaimed. "Do you know any of the particulars?"

"I merely had a telegram, stating that she had died suddenly of pneumonia and asking me to come. It is a terrible blow for poor George."

"Yes, of course, at first, but it may be better for him in the end. It is always best to look on the bright side. She was an ordinary little thing, and he is a superior man. He will be sure to marry again. I have ceased to waste any sympathy on widowers."

There was a long pause.

"George has asked me to come to him," John said at length quietly, "and I am going to New York this afternoon."

"To-day? Oh, no! you must not go until after your birthday."

"I must go to-day."

"No, no; listen to me. I have planned a surprise-party for you. Fifty people are coming. I can't have it without you. It cannot make any material difference to your friend whether you go to him now or two days later, and it will make so much to me."

"I must go to-day."

"You must not; if you love me, John, you will stay for the party. Everybody is invited, and the chickens cooked for the salad, and the cake made."

"Don't you see," he said, "that by going now, I can be of some little help to George about — " He paused. The funeral preparations arose before him in ghastly detail; and in one swift moment of recollection his sister Edith's death, and all that George had been to him then.

"About the funeral?" Mary finished calmly; "there will be others to manage that. If you go two days later, you will have the advantage of arriving when he will need you all the more. Besides, you will get there in time for the funeral then; they can't have it before Saturday."

"Mary, can't I make you understand that I must

go at once? George has been everything to me in times of great trouble, and I cannot fail him now."

"It is not as if you cared for Mrs. Hubbard, or as if Mr. Hubbard were a relation. If he were a relation, I should have nothing more to say."

Graham set his teeth firmly together, and looked at Mary in silence; at last he said "Good-by" very quietly, and put out his hand. She held it for a moment, unconscious how painfully it throbbed in hers. Her mind, poor girl! was on the chickens, — six of them, — and she was wondering if she were to give up the party what she could do with them. Why must Mrs. Hubbard have died at this especial juncture, poor little thing!

"I know you could stay if you chose," she insisted. "The fact that Mr. Hubbard has sent for you to come sometime does not make it necessary to rush off by the first train. He won't expect you so soon. You are very unreasonable —"

"How about your own reasonableness?" Graham asked in quick deep tones. "I tell you I must go, and I will have no more said about it."

Then Mary realized that he was angry. She glanced at him with mingled surprise and resentment.

"Good-by," he said once more, in cold accents.

"Won't you stay to dinner?" she asked with sudden relenting.

"No, I thank you," he answered curtly.

"But it is long past Mrs. Otis's lunch-hour. You must n't go off without something to eat."

"I am not hungry; thank you."

Mary was piqued by the cold way in which her efforts toward reconciliation had been received.

"Good-by," she said, "if you insist upon going;

but I think it is very unkind of you. You have not the least power of putting yourself in another person's place. Most men would see what work it involves to put off a party of fifty people."

"Go on with it, by all means."

"But it seems so farcical to go on with it when it is a birthday party for you. I think you might stay. It is not manly to give way to one's moods so. If you had half the consideration for me that you have for —"

"Look here, Mary, we have had enough of this. Will you be so kind as to be silent? I forbid your saying another word on the subject. Consideration, the power of putting one's self in another person's place, — I like to hear you speak of it!"

Mary's gaze dwelt with a kind of fascination on John's perturbed face and flashing eyes. She listened breathlessly to his abrupt, passionate words. When they ceased he strode out of the room without another glance in her direction. She had an impulse to hasten after him, but she was too proud; for it was he who was in the wrong. He had spoken to her as no gentleman should speak to any lady, much less to the woman whom he professed to love. He would be very penitent presently; she felt assured of that. But although she could forgive him in time, she could never forget.

When John came back from New York, Mary was on the piazza with her embroidery. She kissed him in her old, unenthusiastic fashion, as if it were a necessary form to be gone through with.

"Don't take that chair, John; it is so uncomfortable," she said. "Move up the red one."

It was one of those rare days in October, when Nature cheats one into the belief that summer is to return. One could almost fancy that it was June again, until one looked at the garden where the frost of a few nights before had made sad havoc. The hollyhocks hung black and shrivelled on their stalks, and the asters had perished. It all formed a melancholy contrast to the holiday aspect of four short months ago, when Mary had stood among the roses.

However plainly John could see Mary's faults when he was away from her, he could never resist the glamour of her presence; and one glance at her strong, beautiful face was enough to make him realize with renewed force how dear she was to him.

"It is good to get back to you," he said at last.

She said nothing.

"You got my letter?"

"Yes; but there was n't time to answer it, you wrote so late."

He looked at her wistfully. "You will forgive that wretched morning?" he pleaded.

She laid down her work deliberately. "I knew you would feel sorry for your hasty words, dear, as soon as you were yourself. I was never spoken to so before. You made me very unhappy."

"I was a brute. I have what the English call a 'nasty temper,' and it seems to be growing worse and worse. I get over my anger quickly, however, and you don't know how repentant I feel."

She did not respond to this observation. She took up her work and stitched away in silence. "How did you find your friend?" she asked at last.

"He was better than I expected, thank you."

"There, you see I was right; you could have stayed as well as not."

The color rushed into John's face, but she did not notice it. "I could not have stayed," he returned; "but we won't begin upon that again." He took up a number of the "Atlantic" that was lying on Mary's work-table, and began to turn the leaves.

After a few moments she said, "I wish you would say something, John, and not read in that unsociable way."

He put down his book. "Mary," he said, "I am afraid I have been a great disappointment to you, and the worst of it is I can never change materially. I shall disappoint you straight on to the end of the chapter."

"I think I know all your limitations now," she answered with a smile.

"Perhaps I know yours too; but in spite of that I love you, — I believe I love you all the more. I cannot give you up; I will make you love me still."

"John, why do you talk so strangely? There is no question of giving me up."

"When I was in New York I had a horrible nightmare; I felt as if you and I were so little able to understand each other that perhaps it would be better — better for you, I mean — if we were to part, as it seemed so uncertain whether I could ever make you happy."

"That was very silly of you," she replied cheerfully. "You were entirely upset that morning; you went off without any food."

"When I thought of the possibility of giving you up, it seemed too terrible; I could not bear it."

"How I hate this exaggerated way of talking!" she

said with a little shiver. "Nothing has happened; the whole thing was too trifling to make a scene about. You were angry, and I have forgiven you; that is all. I am not disappointed in you; you are what I expected you to be from the first."

Mary was unaware that in making this statement she was not speaking the absolute truth. The fact was that she had become conscious of John's faults by such slow degrees that she had forgotten there was ever a time when she had not recognized them.

"I told you in the beginning, once for all, that I cared for you," she continued, "and I don't see any object in repeating myself every day. I only ask that you will try to be like other people."

"I will try, Mary; but you had better not flatter yourself that I shall succeed."

"If you were willing to interest yourself in every-day things, we should have a bond of sympathy at once. By the way, I went to see the Beacon Street house with Bessie the other day, — the one opposite the Common, I mean, — and it is very pleasant. I am willing to give up Commonwealth Avenue and live there, since you so much prefer it." Mary, it seemed, could make concessions too. "There are some carved oak chairs at Cruthers's that I wish you would look at with me," she said presently. "You don't know how interested you would get in the details of house-furnishing if you would only give your mind to them."

On his way back from Cruthers's, after leaving Mary down town, John met Reinhart, who was beaming with happiness.

"It 's all right, old fellow!" he exclaimed; "and I am the happiest man in the world. Greta's father

has been so obliging as to take a great fancy to me; and although he and Mary won't hear of a definite engagement at present, we are to try how we like each other for a year. You know the bliss of being engaged to one of the Brooks family. Is it just as delightful after four months? Does it grow better and better, like old wine?"

"It is very delightful," Graham said loyally, as he unlatched the garden gate.

Greta was watching at the window for her lover. Mary had never watched for John with such eagerness. The young girl was more cordial to Graham than she had ever been. He was forced to admit that she was very charming as she stood, with the radiant look on her face, and the sunlight touching her bright hair. "They are very happy," he thought; "how young they both are! I wonder how long it will last!" After all, the quiet affection of a clear-sighted woman was better for a man in the long run. He was painfully conscious of his thirty-eight years, together with every gray hair, and all his unattractive points. What was he, that he should hope to win a woman's enthusiastic affection? He had more than his deserts.

Janet was in the study, and Charles Otis was reading aloud to her as John came in. She was lying on the sofa; it was the first time that she had been downstairs for a week.

She brightened when she saw him. "You are longing to say, 'I told you so!' now you find I did take cold that rainy day," she said, while her face dimpled into its old gayety.

"I am longing to say nothing of the kind. I am only very sorry that you are ill."

Graham did not accept her cordial invitation to stay and listen to the reading, but went out of the room somewhat brusquely, wondering why women always liked Charles Otis. Greta and Reinhart were in the parlor. They started at his approach; there was no place in the house for him.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

The kindest and the happiest pair
Will find occasion to forbear;
And something, every day they live,
To pity, and perhaps forgive.

WILLIAM COWPER.

GRAHAM'S engagement had assumed a new phase. He had faced the drawbacks to his happiness and accepted them with philosophy. If he did not love Mary as blindly as in the early days of their engagement, his affection was deeper and stronger, he told himself. It could never be overturned now. It rested no longer on an imaginary foundation; he saw her without illusions at last. If she were sometimes unsympathetic and hard, it was only from lack of imagination. No one could be kinder than she in any stress of circumstances that called out her sympathies. Her care of Janet during her cold and feverish attack was unflagging, and her devotion to her father in his invalid days never failed. It occurred to Graham that if he himself could only contrive to go into a slow decline, he should be sure of her unqualified devotion to the end.

He never doubted her capacity for the strongest and deepest feeling; he only doubted his power to call it out. A picture often came back to him of Mary leaning over her two little nieces when they were asleep on his faded green sofa. He remem-

bered her radiant look and the furtive passionate way in which she had kissed them. He recalled how he had fancied what it would be to awaken such a nature as hers. She was a fine creature, notwithstanding her faults. She was so straightforward and strong, a rock to lean upon, while her temperament was the balance-wheel which he needed. He still loved her intensely, if no longer blindly; and he trusted that after they were married, his devotion would make him necessary to her. He hoped that he could in time win all the love that he longed for with the hungry, unsatisfied feeling of a lonely man who has been forced to live without love and sympathy, and has thought that he has found them only to have them elude him.

John tried to carry out Mary's wishes with almost pathetic eagerness, and he even consented to her father as a companion on their wedding journey without any outward sign of reluctance. Mr. Brooks had not wholly recovered from his attack of pneumonia, and the doctors prescribed a winter at the South for him; so Mary and John were to be married in November, and take him with them. Mary had given up her winter in Boston without a murmur. Graham had bought a house on Commonwealth Avenue which needed some alterations to make it perfect, and Charles Otis was to oversee them and have it ready in the spring.

Greta was to spend the winter with her sister Emily, and Mrs. Otis had begged for Janet to enliven her solitude, for Charles always spent his winters in Boston with his sister Mrs. Maxwell.

As the eventful day of their marriage approached, John saw less of Mary than ever. He could not

understand why women were so swamped in dress-making, millinery, and wedding presents at such a time. Even his little friend Janet had not a moment to spare. It was almost a relief to him when he had a telegram which made a trip to the West necessary; and it was certainly a relief to Mary, — a man is so in the way during the last busy weeks. She was sure that if she were to search the continent she could find no one to rival John in hopeless indifference to the necessary formalities attending his marriage. When she consulted him about the wedding, she found that he had always liked the simple custom of going to the minister's house to be married. After this discovery, she asked his advice no more.

The wedding, in point of fact, was to take place in the evening, at church, and there was to be a large reception afterward.

Mary and John had spent many hours in making out a list of their acquaintances to whom cards were to be sent. She had urged him to be sure to forget no one; and in consequence, a startling array of singular names coupled with outlandish places in remote parts of the Union was showered upon her.

She had a vision of all these questionable persons arriving in Kingshaven for the fateful occasion (Western people never made anything of a distance of one or two thousand miles she had heard), and creaking up the aisle of the church in heavy boots and inappropriate garments, to the edification of her cousin Mary MacLinton and Charles Otis. She could fancy John presenting his "dear friends" to herself with cheerful alacrity undampened by the memory of her reception of Jim Wright, and she could forecast their offensive cordiality.

After Graham's departure, the peace of undivided absorption settled upon the household.

"Even Mary's wedding journey is to be matter-of-fact and prosaic," Greta said to Janet one morning as they were busily at work in the sitting-room. "Fancy father and John forced to spend a whole winter together! There will be nothing left of either of them by spring, like the Kilkenny cats."

Janet laughed somewhat hysterically. "John will have to give up free-trade and go in for protection," she said. "He has relinquished all his cherished ideas for Mary's sake, and a few principles thrown on the sacrificial altar won't make much difference."

"He can't give up his principles," Greta said; "that 's the trouble with him. If it were only Carl, there are no concessions he would not make. Poor old Mary! what a life she will lead dividing herself up between two jealous men, who each wants her all to himself; it will be a whole winter of Box and Cox."

The nearer the day of the wedding approached, the more depressed Janet's spirits grew. She told herself that she was foolish to borrow trouble, and that if Mary and John were satisfied it did not matter that she thought them unsuited to each other. She threw herself into the final preparations with an energy that surprised Mary, and worked from morning until night with feverish eagerness.

The girls were all so absorbed in the coming event that they had little time or thought to give to their father, who had taken a fresh cold. Janet, at length, felt alarmed, but Mary and Greta with their usual buoyancy refused to look on the dark side. At last Janet on her own responsibility sent for the doctor.

He came, looked grave, and said he feared pneumonia. Indeed, it proved to be a more alarming attack than the former one.

The first news that Graham received of the Brookses' anxiety greeted him the day that he was leaving Chicago for Boston. It came in the form of a telegram from Mary: "Father is dangerously ill. Come at once. Have written twice."

The letters telling of the early stages of Mr. Brooks's illness had failed to reach him, owing to a change in his route, and the telegram was four days old. He hurried home to be met at the station by Sam Randolph with so grave a face that he knew at once what had happened. Mr. Brooks had died the evening after Mary had sent her telegram. The funeral had taken place two days before Graham's arrival.

Even when John was waiting in the Brookses' parlor for Mary to come down, he had difficulty in realizing the change which had taken place. Mr. Brooks had been so full of vitality, even in his invalid days, that it was impossible to believe in his death. Graham glanced about the room at the familiar pictures and the well-remembered furniture,— all was unchanged to the smallest details. He looked out of the long window which opened on the piazza. There was a difference here; outside everything was dead and cold, and shrouded in its first covering of snow.

His pity for Mary was so great that his disappointment in the postponement of his own happiness was swallowed up.

"Poor child!" he said to himself, "it will be a terrible grief to her, and she has never known sorrow."

Mingled with his deep sympathy for Mary, however, was a gleam of hope on his own account. He could not but think that now at last he should be necessary to her. In her unhappiness she would turn to him for comfort. This sorrow would be the means of drawing them nearer together.

He heard a step on the stair; it was not Mary's step. A moment later the door opened, and Janet came in, looking pale, but very sweet in her black gown. He took both her hands in his without a word.

"It will be better now you have come," she said, with one of her shy, trustful glances. "Mary will be down in a few minutes; she sent me to tell you — all about it."

"How is she?" he asked eagerly.

"She is well physically, and she is as quiet and composed as ever, but the change in her face is something sad to see. All the old brightness and life have gone out of it. She won't speak of papa. She attends to all her household duties, just as she always did; yet I, who know her so well, feel how she is suffering. Yes, it was terrible," she went on in answer to some words of John's; "I don't know how we should have lived through it without Sam. Greta and I could do nothing with Mary. She would insist upon staying with papa day and night, and he never liked to have her out of his sight. After two nights Sam came and insisted that she should go to bed, and said he would sit up with papa. She obeyed him like a tired child. I can't tell you half Sam's devotion, or how gentle and kind he was. It was he who told us there was — no hope. Mary was so brave and strong even then. She begged him to tell her

the whole truth. She said, 'Have n't you known me long enough to believe that I would always rather know things as they are?' She was quite silent when he told her, but I broke down. We were opposite the door of the sewing-room, and Sam opened it and bade me lie on the sofa, for he thought I was going to faint; he never thought that Mary would give way. The sewing-room was full of all the presents and Mary's clothes. We had forgotten all about them. When we saw them it came over us both how wholly life had changed. Mary burst into a storm of tears. I was frightened, I had never seen her cry like that before; for a moment the foundations of the world seemed giving way. Then a strange calmness came over me; I could not have cried any more had I wished. Mary went out of the house for a long walk. She was gone two hours. When she came back she was as composed as she is now. It was she who told papa that he could not get well; all he said was, 'Can't you tell me something new? I have known that for some days.' I cannot understand them, but they understood each other. Papa said, 'Remember, Mary, we both hate a scene.' He did not even kiss her. Although we knew there was no hope, it was sudden at the end. I suppose death is always sudden, even if we think we are prepared for it."

"I wish I could have been here," said Graham, from the depths of his heart. It seemed a cruel fate which had deprived him of this opportunity of being of use to Mary. What would he not have given to have been in Sam Randolph's place?

"It will be a comfort to Mary to see you," Janet said, discerning something of what was in his mind.

At this point Greta entered the room; her bright face was clouded, but nothing could crush out her new happiness. When Carl came a moment later, she ran to meet him with her old eagerness.

"Carl has been a great comfort as well as Sam," Janet said, after Greta had left the room. "The one bright spot in this frightful time is the fact that Mary has grown to appreciate and depend upon them both. Greta and Carl are so fond of each other. I think you will not feel that it is a mistake;" and she looked at John shyly.

"They are very fortunate," he said briefly.

"It is hardest for Mary in one way, for she was everything to papa," Janet went on; "yet for that very reason, in another way it makes it easier. She has no remorse. I have the feeling that I might have done more for him. We did not understand each other; I was afraid of him, and — and — it is hard to be always at cross purposes with some one you love."

"It must be hard," said Graham.

Janet began to cry hysterically. She had kept up before Mary; but the thought which John's face called up of the future as it was to have been had overcome her. Graham longed to take her in his arms and comfort her, as if she had indeed been his sister. He could think of nothing to say, and sat at a little distance from her motionless and silent.

She grew quieter presently. There was something about the strong man before her that always rested and soothed her. "I feel as if I had lost all my motive for living; that is why it is so hard," she continued. "I had hoped that when Mary and Greta

had gone, and I was all that papa had, he would grow to care for me as he did for the others."

"You don't mean to say —" began Graham; but he checked himself. It was intolerable to him to think that her father had not appreciated her rare nature. He felt an additional reason for disliking Mr. Brooks, followed by quick compunction.

"I ought not to have told you that; I can't help telling you everything I am thinking," she said helplessly. "It was my own fault. Papa liked girls to be bright and gay; I could be gay enough away from him, but I was always shy with him. Now that it is too late, I think I ought to have overcome it."

"These things are very hard," Graham said; "but you must not make yourself miserable. You have nothing to reproach yourself with. You loved your father; he must have known it. He was very undemonstrative; he probably cared for you more than he let you know."

"If he had lived I am sure that we should have understood each other sometime; but now that he is gone, I feel as if there were no place, no work for me."

"You must not let yourself feel that; there is work for people like you always. It is not so much what we do as what we are."

Janet rose to go; she heard Mary's step on the stair. "You are very good to believe in me," she said, giving him a grateful look as she went out of the room.

Graham started at the sight of Mary's familiar figure in its black dress, and at her pale face with the dark lines under the eyes.

"Mary," he said, after their first greetings were

over and they were sitting together on the sofa, "how I wish I could have been with you!"

This afternoon all Mary's nerves were quivering, and she was more sensitive than usual to the little things in John which annoyed her. They were so trivial that she was ashamed of herself for feeling them. She had a desperate wish that he would not hold her hand in that apologetic fashion, but would either keep it firmly and insistently or let it go.

During her father's illness she had wondered more than once what John would have done had he been at home. He as well as Sam was an experienced nurse. She felt her question answered now. He would have given in to her; he would have let her take the whole care of her father had she chosen. How little he understood her! She was thankful that he had been gone through all that critical time.

"You could have done nothing had you been here," she said gently; for sorrow had made her more considerate. "Sam and Carl did everything that could be done."

Why was it that she always liked John better when he was at a distance? Then it was easy to sum up all his good qualities; but there was something in his mere presence which irritated her when she was in her present mood.

"I wish I could make you understand how much I have felt for you," he said.

"Oh, I know it! You are very good. Every one is very good."

"But that does not make it any easier, I know," he went on. "Such a loss—"

"Don't speak of it!" she broke in imperiously.

She was only conscious of the fact that Graham

had never liked her father. She had fancied it before, but was sure of it now; it seemed a mockery that he should be trying to comfort her. She strove to make up for her impatience by asking him kind questions about his journey. She had never seemed so interested in his movements before; and yet he felt farther from her than ever. He longed to compel her to listen to him, while he poured out his love and sympathy; but he was keenly sensitive to her mood, and so forbore.

## CHAPTER XIX.

The music's silver wavelets crowd,
Distinct and clear, but never loud;
. . . . . .
Like a new life gushing through me
Sweep the heavenly harmonies.

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

IN the weeks which followed, Mary bore her sorrow without complaint and to all appearance unflinchingly. In spite of her external calm, however, John could feel that the mainspring of her life was broken.

In her restless unhappiness she inwardly chafed at the conventions which forbade the few poor distractions of society at a time when she needed all possible outside aid to take her thoughts from herself. She had a consuming desire for excitement. She wanted to read absorbing novels, she would have liked to go every night to the theatre; in short, she longed for anything that would detach her mind from its never absent pain. Her sense of fitness was keen enough, however, to prevent her engrossing herself in any pursuit less legitimate than work, into which she threw all her energies. In addition to her usual charity work, she had a new occupation in the disentanglement of her father's business affairs, and she and Sam Randolph were closeted together by the hour.

In her sorrow, John loved her with a more absorbing affection than ever, and it was the one aim of all his days to make her happier. He understood her so little that he still fancied this end was best

gained by leaving her the entire control of her own destiny, whereas she was longing for a strong will to force her to give up this wearying self-reliance.

When she spoke of postponing their marriage until April, John acquiesced with the patience and fortitude of a martyr. She wondered that he could be so dull as not to see that although she was too worn out mentally and physically to give any thought to her future, she would have been thankful had he peremptorily insisted upon a quiet wedding at the end of a few weeks and then taken her and Janet away somewhere, until the house was ready for them in the spring. In the change and movement of travelling she might find the distraction that she needed for her cure. She could not propose this plan, and in fact it had so many objections that she would have opposed it had John suggested it; yet he could have made her yield in time, she fancied, had he insisted. Her lover's unselfishness, which quality she thought a weakness in a man, was a constant irritation to her; she liked the strength of selfishness.

Meanwhile John's hopeless, dispirited look cut Janet to the heart. At Mary's suggestion, she took the drives with him that her sister was too preoccupied to take, and she was always ready to fill in the gaps caused by Mary's frequent departure on business or charitable errands.

Under her course of drives and talks with John, Janet revived like a flower after a long storm. It was a renewal, in some measure, of those Adirondack days which she looked back upon as the happiest in her life. As the weeks passed, however, and she found John revealing more and more of his inner self to her, she began to think that there might be danger

in this intimacy. She knew that there was no possibility of his growing to care more for her than for her sister, — he was at once too loyal and too blindly in love, — but she feared that the fact that he always found a sympathetic companion in her might make it harder to break down the barrier of reserve that had been slowly growing up between Mary and himself.

She decided that it would be safer to avoid these daily glimpses of John. It was the middle of January when she came to this decision, and at the same time it chanced that there was a lull in Mary's business affairs, and that the alterations in the interior of the new house on Commonwealth Avenue were well enough under way to make the questions of papers and rugs imminent. Mary threw herself into this new occupation eagerly, and John was too happy at having a common interest with her at last, to remember that he had once found the thought of living in Boston an intolerable one, or that he had ever looked upon the necessary details as so many badges of a servitude which he hated. Janet told herself that she was glad the better understanding between Mary and John had come; but she missed him more than she could have believed possible, and when she saw them together she felt a bitter unreasoning jealousy, which she had believed a quality wholly foreign to her nature. Sometimes she wondered if the nightmare which had occasionally haunted her when she was ill or out of spirits could become a reality. No, it was impossible, it was sheer insanity to imagine such a thing; it was simply her misfortune that she could not help loving so intensely that a mere sisterly affection was stronger with her than the chief love of her life with a well-balanced woman like Mary.

As the winter advanced, Mary resumed her attendance at the Symphony Rehearsals. John and she had fallen back upon this species of entertainment, now that the theatre, for which happily they had a common passion, was denied them. Mary was too honest to delude herself into the belief that she was fond of music, although she played with careful precision. She went to the Symphony Rehearsals from a sense of duty, mingled with a desire to see her friends. John had discovered early in the season that he had lost the love of music which he had once flattered himself he possessed. He went to the concerts to see Mary.

One Friday, Mary was prevented from indulging in her usual distraction by the needs of a poor family. She offered her ticket to Greta.

"My dear," said this young person, "do you suppose that I love the Fifth Symphony so little that I would like to listen to it in company with John, who has no ear for music, and eyes only for you, when my own 'young man' is idle and attainable? No, I thank you, I have too much reverence for Beethoven."

Greta laughed gayly. Her constant cheerfulness and her unwearying absorption in Carl Reinhart jarred on Mary. This love, which refused to be permanently clouded even by her father's death, she thought in doubtful taste.

Janet accepted the ticket after much urging. She told herself that she yielded because she longed to lose herself in the music. It would be quixotic to carry out her resolution in regard to avoiding John to the point of giving up such a chance as this.

Although it was only a little after two o'clock

when she reached Music Hall, John was already in his seat.

"He knows that Mary's train always brings her here early, and so he has made a heroic effort to be on time," she said to herself. She had a long view of him as she crossed the hall before he saw her. She thought how attractive he was; and that if he were a stranger she should be struck with his fine figure, with its look of strength, while his face would interest her from its expression of quiet humor mingled with sadness; and yet Mary considered him plain. His smile, however, was what she cared for most. It warmed her like sunshine as it fell on her. "He is glad to see me," she reflected, "even if he did expect Mary."

At the first notes of the overture Janet felt the thrill that comes when one hears a great orchestra after a long interval. When that part of the programme was over, she turned to her companion. "Didn't you enjoy that?" she demanded breathlessly.

"Not really, — not as you enjoyed it. I am following in Darwin's footsteps, musically. You remember that he grew to like music less and less, until it became a positive pain to him."

"You have not his excuse."

"I grant that my object of absorption is rather different. My mind is at present so steeped in rugs and curtains, wall-papers and furniture-coverings, that my power of appreciating more unsubstantial things is killed."

"I am sure that you will like the Symphony. If you intend to make light of that, you may go at once; I shall not love you any more."

"If that is the alternative, I promise you that I will enjoy it deeply, intensely, devoutly."

He might joke as much as he pleased; but for all that, Janet was determined that he should care for the Fifth Symphony as much as she did. She was exhilarated by the music, which carried her out of herself, and brought her a temporary loss of pain. Then, too, it was impossible not to enjoy having John all to herself after a long week of privation; he was as genial and delightful as in the old days.

When the Symphony began she grew more and more absorbed, and less and less conscious of the actual world around her. The music gave the interpretation of all that had been best worth having in her life. She had glimpses of the Adirondacks, with cool silver lakes encircled by rich green and starred with lilies, and the peace of that time once more enveloped her like a garment. Then the scene shifted, and she was struggling with the wind and rain that day on the Common, with her pulses full of the mere physical delight in living. Afterward she was driving through the crowded streets, with her late enthusiasm quenched by the sudden awful news which had brought her face to face with the sadder problems of humanity. The passing moment combined the joys and the sorrows of those other days, and fused them into a succession of chords. Life *was* worth living, even at its hardest; there was no doubt of that.

When the first movement was over, Janet turned slowly toward Graham, and tried to force herself back to the present. Some young people behind them assisted her to attain her object. They were discussing the merits of the orchestra.

"I wish we could have more new music," said one at last; "I am tired to death of Beethoven."

"Yes," the other returned; "one likes Beethoven, as one likes Shakspeare, in small, infrequent doses. They both appeal to the intellect rather than to the emotions. For thorough-going enjoyment give me Wagner and Rider Haggard."

John looked at Janet and smiled. "After that observation I can very nearly find it in my heart to like Beethoven."

The first strains of the Andante brought Janet almost more of pain than pleasure. How distinctly she recalled one evening when Alfred had taken her to a concert, and this Symphony was played! She remembered her absorption in the Andante and his indifference. She had instinctively shut away all the things that she cared for most from him. How different John was! Whether he agreed with her or not, she was always sure of his comprehension. It came to her suddenly, with the force of a revelation, how strongly her feeling for John was bound up with her life. It was not love; it was something more intangible and spiritual. It exalted her, and made her feel that there were no heroic deeds which she could not do. She felt passionate gratitude that she was herself and no other. She had often envied Mary her even temperament and her superb health; but to-day she was only too happy to pay the price of her own limitations for the sake of such moments as these. The music thrilled her through and through with its strength and sweetness, and elevated her to something of its own nobleness. What did it matter if half her life were spent in darkness, so long as she could rekindle her own little torch of enthusiasm at these great central fires?

She glanced at Graham, and wondered if he too were under the spell of the music. If she were never to see him again, the memory of his friendship would be a constant inspiration to her. Her jealousy of Mary was gone. She was content with her own unsubstantial share of this life's good. She would rather have this sense of spiritual and mental kinship with Graham than possess his love on the terms on which Mary held it, and be blind like her to everything but his mere superficial outside.

The concert was over. Some of the audience hurried out as if one more duty were accomplished and they wished to lose no time in hastening to another; while others lingered to chat with friends. Graham and Janet said almost nothing. As they were leaving the hall, they met Charles Otis.

"It was a good concert, was it not?" he said, "although they played the Andante too fast. I wish you could have heard the Brahms Symphony last week, Janet; it was superb."

"Beethoven is good enough for me."

"He is good enough for all of us; but we occasionally tire of familiar music, as we do of old books and old friends."

"I like the old friends best," said Janet. It was not until she saw Charles's smile of self-satisfaction that she remembered he was a much older friend than John.

Janet had an errand to do, and Graham said that he would go with her. Happily it had begun to snow; so Charles preferred a refuge in the horse-cars to their society.

"I love the snow," Janet said, as she shook the flakes from her fluffy black boa. Charles had brought her down from the heights, but she had a warm un-

dercurrent of happiness left. She had never looked more charming. The wind had deepened her color, and blown her rebellious hair into little curls about her face, and her eyes were full of an inward light. She began to chat gayly with John as they made their way through the crowded streets, and he caught the infection of her light-heartedness.

He waited with contented acquiescence while some velvet was measured off for her, philosophically examining the system of balls that brought the change. He said he could never understand what instinct carried a woman straight to the right counter in one of these bewildering establishments. He declared that it would be far easier for him to find his way in the most crooked of foreign cities. Janet said that this instinct for shopping was a sixth sense that had been given to women.

While they were waiting for the parcel and change, a middle-aged countryman approached the counter and asked for a quarter of a yard of velvet.

"Do you want it straight or on the bias?" the girl in waiting inquired impassively.

The man rubbed his head thoughtfully, but this action brought him no light. "I don't know; my daughter did n't say," he said helplessly. "It 's for a hat."

"We always sell it straight unless a person especially wants it on the bias," the woman said indifferently.

He meditated. "If it ain't right, she 'll be terrible disappointed," he observed.

"If it 's for a hat," Janet interposed, "you had better get it on the bias."

"Thank you, Miss," the man said gratefully.

"That was very good of you," Graham said, as they walked away.

"How could I help it? It seemed so pathetic for that poor girl to have to wear her old hat to church on Sunday, because her father bought her the wrong velvet. Do you suppose she is pretty? She is evidently a brunette, because the velvet was red."

They pleased themselves with constructing the history of the shabby man and his daughter as they went to their horse-car. Janet was sure that he lived on a farm, — one of those poor New England farms that are fast falling into decay.

"It is an old red farm-house," she said, "like the one where my father lived, and where my Aunt Janet still stays; and it has an orchard, dear to the artist, but a grief to the farmer and his daughter, because the stock is fast running out. There are more stones in the field than there are apples on the trees. Don't you love that beautiful, sad New England country?"

"Indeed, I do; but I didn't know that you had ever had a chance to care for it."

"After mamma died I used to spend whole summers with Aunt Janet; and once I stayed all winter. I liked the winter almost more than the summer. I was very little; but you can't forget those things. They become bone of your bone and flesh of your flesh. If you have once cared for it, there is nothing else like it."

Graham gave her an account of a trip that he and George Hubbard had once taken on foot through the hill country in southern New Hampshire. She led him on by skilful questions, until he left this surface talk and began to tell her more of himself. She felt that her auditor was completely at her mercy, and

this knowledge excited her. She wondered, as she had often done, why men were so much simpler and less self-conscious than women. When a man gave his confidence, there was no half-way about it. It was given with directness and with no thought of the future. "A woman," she reflected, generalizing from herself, "never gives herself away without a strong impulse the next moment to take back all she has said."

She paid for her afternoon's pleasure by a sleepless night. Had she not been deliberately trying to see how far her power extended over John? She had made him tell her things that he ought to have kept for Mary. "But he could not talk to her in that way," she said in self-justification; "it would not interest her."

"But you have no right to usurp Mary's place in any particular," said her accusing conscience. "What does loyalty mean, if not guarding the rights of others more jealously than you would guard your own? Mary has the most absolute faith in you."

"What harm can there be in giving him the sympathy that Mary denies him?" she asked herself. "There is no danger for him, and I will risk the danger for myself. He is so constituted that having once given his affections, he will keep on loving Mary, and thinking her perfection all his life; and yet he cannot help feeling a void sometimes. If I help to fill this, what is the harm?"

"How would you like it if you were engaged, and your sister gave your lover the kind of appreciation and sympathy that you propose to give to John?" suggested her conscience.

It was enough. "I must not see him," she said.

"It will only make it more complicated for them. How happy he was this afternoon!" she reflected, with a guilty feeling of triumph. "How much happier he always is with me than with Mary, and yet how he loves her!"

That afternoon of enjoyment made it all the harder to avoid John. There were so many questions that she wished to ask him. In their talk she had made some statements which she wanted to qualify; he too, on his side, apparently felt an added interest in her. She faithfully tried to keep out of his way; but when he lent her a book and then asked her opinion of it, what else could she do but give it? After all, the situation in its present form would last for so short a time that it did not matter. The wedding-day was settled. It was to be the 3d of April, and it was now the 1st of February. After John was married, her intercourse with him would of necessity be much more casual and infrequent.

## CHAPTER XX.

Even to look forward was not to hope: the dumb future spoke no comfort, offered no promise, gave no inducement to bear present evil in reliance on future good.

CHARLOTTE BRONTË.

"JANET," said Mary one morning, as they were sitting together in the sewing-room, "John and I have been making the most delightful plan. I would not tell it to you until the details were all arranged. It concerns you."

"How interesting!"

"You are to live with us, my dear. Isn't that too enchanting? It makes the future look brighter than I ever supposed it could."

"Oh, I cannot do it!" said Janet, hastily. "Indeed, I can't."

"And why not, if you please? Bring on your arguments, and let me demolish them one by one."

"John would rather have you all to himself, for one thing."

"No, he would not; he assented to the scheme at once. He is almost as fond of you as he is of me; and he has learned that I cannot be completely happy without you. So you see that need n't interfere, and we will consider the matter settled."

"I can't do it; indeed, I cannot. It is lovely in you to think of it, but it will be impossible."

"Nonsense! And may I ask, in passing, what is to become of you if you don't live with us?"

"Greta and I can live on here together until she is married."

"My dear, don't you see the impossibility of that plan? You and Greta are altogether too young to live by yourselves."

"We could get some one to live with us," Janet suggested, after a moment of silence.

"That scheme will not work, either; I must let this house, if I can. Cousin Mary has some friends who will probably take it for a year, and they will want it by the first of May. So, little girl, you will have to make the best of it and live with me."

"I can't, Mary."

"What do you propose to do? Your suggestions so far have not had the merit of being practical."

Janet drooped her head over her work. "I can live with Emily," she said at last.

"My child, that little hall-bedroom is not a fit place for any one to sleep in for more than a night or two, and it is too cold for you with your delicate lungs; and neither can you share Margaret's room, with your tendency to sleeplessness. It is all arranged; John and I have talked it over with Emily and Sam. You are to belong to us as soon as we are married, and Greta is to go to Emily."

"The hall-bedroom is large enough and warm enough for her then?"

"She is so strong that it does not matter where she sleeps."

Mary explained at length all the obvious advantages in her plan. She ended by saying, "My dear, I need you particularly this spring and summer. You will prevent my feeling homesick when I first get into the house. Then, later on, you and John

and I will go to some delightful place, — Newport or Mount Desert. You have always wanted to see Mount Desert."

"I cannot do it, Mary. Don't urge me, please! I know I seem ungrateful, but I can't help it," cried the poor child. There were tears in her eyes, and her voice trembled.

"You can and you must," Mary persisted. "Give me one good reason to the contrary."

"I don't think it's a good plan for a third person to live with two newly married people," Janet said in a low tone.

"How absurdly romantic you are! Have n't you learned yet that John and I are most matter-of-fact?"

"You may be, but John is not."

"You will not interfere with us in the least," Mary said, ignoring this speech. "You will double our pleasure; John has always been as fond of you as if you were really his sister."

Janet rose hastily. She was trembling with excitement. "Mary, when I tell you that it would not be right for me to live with you feeling as I do about it, you surely will stop trying to make me do it. I cannot give up my will to yours always. This is an important matter."

"Give me one good reason," said Mary, barring the door, "and I will let you off for to-day. It is nothing but your nonsensical fear of being in the way. Tell me the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

The color rushed in a vivid flame to Janet's cheeks.

An idea suddenly came to Mary. "Dear, are you

thinking of settling your future in another way?" she asked gently. "Has Charles — do you think that Charles — "

"Oh, no, no!" cried Janet, hurriedly; "that is out of the question. Let me go, Mary; it is cruel of you to urge me any more."

Mary released her with the mental reservation that she would renew the attack the next day.

John came out unexpectedly that afternoon, and Mary and he had a long talk. For once they agreed in their wishes; and as each had a strong will and common-sense was on their side, they had no doubt they should ultimately conquer. Janet did not know that John was in the house, and she came upon him unexpectedly, sitting with Mary in the library. She tried to escape, and then had a dull feeling that it was best to face the two and have it over with once for all.

"How ill you are looking!" said John, anxiously.

"It is cheering to be told of it," she answered carelessly.

"Sit down!" her sister commanded. Janet sank into a chair.

Mary and John crossed the room and stood before her. Mary had put her hand lightly through his arm. They looked happier and more in harmony than they had ever done.

"I want you to hear from John's own lips just how he feels about your living with us," Mary began.

"How could you have doubted that it would give me the greatest pleasure?" he asked reproachfully. "What is the good in having a sister if I am not allowed to take care of her?"

Again the tears came into Janet's eyes. She could not speak, and yet she must force herself to say something.

"We will consider it settled, then," said John, conclusively.

"No," said Janet, starting up; "I cannot do it. I have decided. When I once make up my mind, I do not change."

"Yes, you do, if you make a foolish decision."

Mary went out of the room at this juncture, thinking that perhaps John would have more influence with her sister if he were alone with her.

"I have not made a foolish decision," said Janet; "it is one which I have thought out carefully and conscientiously."

"I know how you feel," Graham said, taking a vacant chair by her side. "You think that you will interfere with us. You don't at all realize the place you hold with your friends. It would be impossible for you to be anything but a comfort."

"I cannot do it," Janet repeated helplessly. It frightened her to feel her resolution weakening.

"Have you any other plans?" Graham asked.

"Yes," she answered desperately; "I want to be independent; I want to do some kind of work. I should like to go to new places and see new people."

"That can be easily managed. We shall all go somewhere this summer."

"But that is not the same thing. I want to go away by myself; I want change and excitement."

"Do you really mean that you think you would get tired of us?" he asked. "Can't you trust us to give you what variety you need?"

"I might get tired of you?" Janet replied, glan-

cing up so sweetly that John felt assured that her scruples were unselfish ones.

"We will call it settled," he said, his face lighting up. "You can have the consolation of making two people happy."

Mary, who had just come in, overheard these last words. "*You* will be happy, I am sure, you dear child!" she said. "We shall do everything to make you so. The little room with the yellow-sprigged paper and the white paint that you admired so much the other day, the back bedroom two flights up, is to be yours; and it is to be furnished just as you like."

Janet rose. "You are both of you very good," she said. "I can't thank you enough for your kindness, but I cannot accept it. For one thing, the obligation is too great."

"But you are willing to go to Emily," said Mary, piqued.

Janet grew desperate. "If I go to Emily, I can pay my share of the housekeeping expenses," she said bluntly. "I know that you would not allow me to do that, but it will make me more independent. Then, too, if I go to Emily I shall be allowed to lead my own life as I choose."

"These are childish reasons," said John, growing angry. "Do you expect us to interfere with your liberty? Have you so little friendship for me that you refuse to give me the great pleasure of taking care of you? Do you think the obligation would be on your side? Do you mean you would rather live with Sam and Emily?" He asked these questions rapidly, with gathering heat.

"I would rather live with Sam and Emily," she

said steadily. "I do not wish to live with you and Mary. Will you believe me, and let me go?" She turned from one to the other.

"No, I will not believe you," Mary said; "I know this is some morbid scruple. Whether you like it or not, you will have to live with us; there is no alternative, for Emily has no room for you."

"I can go to her, and Greta can live with you until she is married."

"We don't want Greta. Come, this is ridiculous; you are behaving like a child! Emily would rather have Greta, because she will be such a help with the children, whereas you are so delicate that you would be only an additional care to her, while to us you would be an unspeakable comfort."

"I shall not change my mind," said Janet, as she left the room. She heard Mary excusing her to John on the score of her ill-health. She had seen a pained look on his face. How ungrateful and perverse she must seem!

"It is evident that she really does not want to live with us," she heard him say in a cold tone; "I shall not refer to the subject again."

"He is disappointed in me," she thought; "he will not care about me any more, and it is better so." This reflection was followed by such keen anguish that it seemed unbearable. She went to her room and flung herself on the bed, conscious of but one impulse, an uncontrollable desire to get away. How could she endure week after week of this misery? How could she bear Mary's constant arguments and John's cold looks? But what should she do? She struggled with this problem far into the night. Before she fell asleep an idea occurred

to her. "To-morrow is the day," she said to herself wearily; "I will do it; there is nothing else left to do."

On her way to the Kingshaven station the next morning Janet came face to face with John. His cold greeting gave her a quick sinking of the heart.

"You did not understand me yesterday," she said impetuously. "You thought me ungrateful and obstinate. I am neither. If you believed in your friends, you would know I had some good reason for what I said. Could n't you see that I decided as I did because I thought it right not to come to you and Mary, and not because I would not like it?"

"We won't go into that again; you had the assurance from both of us that we should be only too glad to have you."

He walked on a few steps, and then he turned and overtook her.

"Janet," he begged, "won't you tell me your real reason for not wanting to live with us? Truth is always so much simpler, and the whole truth hurts less in the end. I know you might find it a little dull, but we would try our hardest to make you happy. You are so sunny yourself, and make life so bright for us all, that it is hard to remember that you can find it dull or dreary. Tell me the whole truth."

"If I were in your place, I would rather have Mary all to myself," she faltered.

"Oh, is that it?" and his face brightened. "Then you need not have any more scruples. Even if I disliked you intensely, Mary would be so much

happier for having you with her that I should thankfully bear with you."

Then Janet wished that she had been silent. "You must let me have my own way," she entreated. "I may be wrong, but I have determined; nothing can change me."

"And I have also made up my mind; nothing can change me. You have accused me of giving up my own way too much; this time, now that I know your real objection and how flimsy a one it is, I shall not give it up."

"I must not stop to argue the point any longer, or I shall lose my train," said Janet, who was miserably conscious of a wish to yield. She did not know which was the harder, — to have John angry with her, or to have him her friend.

An hour or two later, Janet was ringing the doorbell of a hospital. After she had done so, she had a longing to retreat. What madness, what folly had she undertaken? Yet it would be too cowardly to go back. She heard a step slowly crossing the hall, and coming nearer and nearer. Even now she could escape, but she remained firm to her purpose.

"Can you show me where the nurse committee meet?" she asked the pleasant-faced maid who came to the door.

She crossed the clean but dreary corridors, permeated with the odor of disinfecting fluid, and entered the room to which she was shown. She felt like a criminal in a court of justice.

"It is the only thing that I can do," she repeated to herself. "I must leave home; I can't live on in this way any longer."

In the room sat a dozen ladies in solemn conclave.

A young and pretty girl was undergoing her examination, and apparently was not taking the ordeal seriously enough.

"You know you will have to brush back all those curls and wear a cap, if you decide to become a nurse," said an elderly woman in an abnormally high bonnet. "Hair on the forehead is so untidy. A sick person does n't like to see it."

"Well, I guess any sick person I had the care of would like to look at me better with my bangs," said the girl, pushing back her mat of hair. "Now, did you ever see anything so frightful as my high forehead?" she asked impartially.

"It is the rule; we cannot deviate from it," said the chairman of the committee.

"Yet she certainly does look better with her bangs," observed one of the younger women.

"That is a matter of opinion," said the lady in the high bonnet, gravely. "For my part, I always prefer to see the whole forehead."

When it came to Janet's own turn to be interviewed, her sense of humor deserted her. The girl with a bang gave her an irritating look of sympathy and good-comradeship, as she left the room. "Will all the nurses be like that?" Janet thought; "however, if they only like me, it won't much matter what they are."

"What recommendations have you?" asked the chairman of the committee, studying Janet critically from head to foot.

"None; I did not know that they were necessary."

"This is very strange," the chairman said to her next neighbor. They consulted together for a moment in an undertone, and then the latter, a sweet-

faced woman in black, said aloud, "Don't you know any clergyman or physician in Boston who could give you a recommendation?"

"I know plenty of people," Janet said; "I know one of the directors, — Miss Rollins."

They asked her a series of questions, some of which seemed to her curiously irrelevant, and others painfully to the point. She sat there feeling as if she were in a dream. Was it really she, Janet Brooks, with her terror of undertaking new things and her love of ease and comfort, who was trying to get a place in the Training School for Nurses?

"You look very delicate," said one of the ladies. "I am afraid that you have not the physical strength for this work."

"I shall get stronger if I have something to do."

"Of course you understand that we shall have to investigate your recommendations before we can decide to put your name on our list as a candidate."

"We have no vacancies at present," said another lady, impressively. "We shall have no place for you in any case, until the autumn."

"Oh!" said Janet; "I supposed I might enter at once."

"No, that would be impossible."

"How old are you?" inquired the first speaker.

"Twenty-two."

"Ah, that settles it; we never admit any one who is younger than twenty-three."

"I shall be twenty-three in June," said Janet, eagerly. "Do you think — do you think that if I decide to come, you can take me in the autumn? I will try *so hard* all summer to get strong."

Her appearance, while it aroused the interest of

the committee, was evidently in some way against her.

"If you could get a position in a library or as an accountant somewhere, I should say it would be much better for you than such hard work as nursing," said the wearer of the high bonnet, in a tone of gentle patronage.

"I do not need to work for the money," Janet explained.

"Ah! have you never thought, then, how by becoming a nurse you will take the work away from some one who really needs it?"

"Yes, I have thought of it; but money is not the greatest of our needs. Some of us need the work infinitely more for other reasons; and provided we have a gift for it, I don't see why we should give way to those people who merely want the money."

"Very true," said several ladies in a chorus of approval, while others shook their heads.

"It may be that I should not make a satisfactory nurse," Janet said humbly, "but won't you please try me? Although I am not physically strong, I can go without sleep, and I am said to be a quieting person, and I can read aloud by the hour together."

A smile on the faces of some of the committee showed her how childish and inexperienced she must seem.

"What I want to do is to go through with the course," she said, "and then take such positions as I can fill. There must be some cases," she added, "where people are not very ill, and care more for some one who can be companionable than for mere physical strength."

There was a little more talk, and then the attractive

woman in black took Janet aside, and told her that she must try to get strong, and that if she were better in the autumn and still in the same mind, she could present herself again.

"Have you always had a wish to learn nursing?" she asked.

"No, but I have a longing to do something to take me out of myself."

Her questioner glanced at her black dress and said sympathetically, "Such trials are hard, but may I give you one piece of advice?"

"Yes," said Janet, gratefully.

"Go home and try to do all the little things that come to you faithfully. You are not strong enough for this work."

"My home is soon to be broken up, and I don't want to be dependent on my sisters. One is married, and the others will be soon."

"Can't you live with any of them?"

"Yes," she said wearily; "one of them is anxious to have me with her, but I want to be independent."

"Take my advice. Live with the sister who wants you; don't make the mistake of sacrificing her happiness to your sense of duty."

"Thank you," said Janet.

As she passed through the hall, she met a patient who had been brought from the operating-room, and was being carried to the elevator in a basket by two men. She shuddered and walked on rapidly; but the pale, suffering face was destined to haunt her for weeks.

Janet went down the hospital steps with a hopeless sense of failure. What could she do? Where should she turn next? She had not given up the idea of

trying to enter the training-school in the autumn, but in the mean time she would have to live through eight months. She must go away from home for a few weeks at least. She reviewed her list of friends and relatives, most of whom were not far enough away to make the break in the intercourse between herself and her family complete.

"I will go to Aunt Janet," she thought at last.

"I hope you have had a successful day?" Mary asked when she reached home.

"*Very*," she replied, "but I am so tired that I am going straight to bed."

"What a pity!" said Greta, "for Carl is coming to tea." She looked the picture of contentment as she stood before the fire.

"There are contrasts in life," thought Janet.

## CHAPTER XXI.

Can I remember how ignorantly and innocently I suffered it to steal upon me by degrees, how under a mask of friendship I cozened myself into that which had it appeared to me at first in its true shape, I had feared and shunned?

DOROTHY OSBORNE.

IT required all Janet's persistency to accomplish the visit to her aunt, as Mary thought it an insane plan for her to go to the country in midwinter. John, however, became her unexpected ally. He said he could understand her longing for the hills, and that he should like nothing better than to take her to Hilltown and stay over Sunday.

"No," she said nervously; "I could not think of leaving Mary if you were away, and besides it would not do to have Aunt Janet's monotonous life invaded by a man."

When Janet finally reached the Hilltown station, she found her aunt's well-remembered sleigh waiting for her, while Job, the man who managed the farm, held the head of the sorrel horse. They were both old friends of hers, and she shook hands cordially with the one, and then turned to pat the other.

"Tracy grows old," she said, "but he seems as afraid of the cars as when he was young and skittish."

"I don't think it's exactly scared of the train that he is now; it's scared of being scared, — it's kind

of a habit," Job observed as he helped her into the sleigh.

Everything was unchanged; even the buffalo robe was the old one, — she recognized the moth-eaten place in the corner.

"It's a long time sence you 've ben here in winter, Miss Janie," Job went on.

"Yes, four years, — a long time."

Her last winter visit was vividly in her remembrance. She and Alfred had come up together when they were first engaged, — he to spend a few days with his father, who was the doctor and chief potentate in the little town, and she to stay with her aunt. Everything she passed brought up some recollection of that time. On her left was Brand Pond, where she and Alfred had skated; and over in the distance was Oak Hill, where they had coasted together. Alfred had refused to see any beauty in the bleak prospect. She remembered how bored he had grown when the first novelty had worn off, and how thankful he was to get back to town.

They drove through the straggling village street, and up the long hill which led to the Brooks farm. Janet loved every step of the way, and all the weather-beaten houses with their rows of barns which eclipsed the dwellings, and were invariably placed where they would most effectually cut off the view. The snow was so deep that it was almost on a level with the fences. It stretched away on either side until it met the horizon, around which the hills formed a dark, irregular ring, flecked with white. After a time they came to some woods, which were always her especial delight. The recent snow was weighing down the pines and hemlocks on either side of the

road until they almost made an archway above it, while a few slender white-stemmed birches let in the blue sky through their network of branches.

"How John would enjoy this!" Janet thought, with a thrill of pleasure, followed by a stab of pain.

When they reached the familiar old red farmhouse, nestling under the bare branches of the two huge elms, her aunt came to the door to greet her. "Well, my dear," she said, "this is a cold welcome. The thermometer was down to 25° below zero this morning."

Miss Brooks added to the general frigidity by giving her niece an unenthusiastic kiss. For a moment Janet felt chilled. She herself was so entirely a King that she never could become accustomed to the ways of her Brooks relations. She flung her arms about her aunt impulsively.

"Aunt Janet, I never was so glad to see you in my life."

Her aunt smiled, and perceptibly thawed. In common with most reticent persons, she liked cordiality in others.

Miss Brooks reminded Janet of her sister Mary in her figure and coloring, although outwardly Mary was a softened and improved copy of her aunt. Miss Janet Brooks, however, possessed a keener mind. In her solitary and loveless life, which might have been a full and rounded one had her lot been cast elsewhere, she had turned for variety to the world of books, and study had become her absorbing passion.

She conducted Janet into the prim sitting-room, with its horse-hair furniture, and its shelves of carefully assorted books, and bade her draw up to the

stove and warm her feet. They had much to talk over, for they had not seen each other since the day of Mr. Brooks's funeral. At length, when each member of the family had been discussed in turn, Miss Brooks asked abruptly, —

"How is my friend John Graham? Are he and Mary any better friends?"

Janet felt herself growing hot at this unexpected question. "He is very well; they are going to be married in April, as I believe I wrote you."

"That is not answering me. They seemed to me as badly matched as any two people in my acquaintance."

"They are very well satisfied."

"Then they are a couple of fools. Is there no one to tell them that they are preparing a life-long tragedy for themselves? When I saw them in the summer I marvelled, but I held my peace, thinking they might grow together. In the autumn I found that the breach had widened. I said, 'This cannot last.'"

"It will last. John is very much in love. Why may it not be a good thing, — Mary is so fine and so strong?"

"Strength, my dear, is a dangerous weapon. It works in two ways. Mary's strength is like a gun in the hands of an unscrupulous sportsman who wants a shot at everything. It is n't so pleasant when you find yourself fired at. She needs a keeper, — some one who will overmaster her by his superior force, and make her lock up that gun until there are bears and wolves to be exterminated, in which case it will be of immense value. John is n't weak precisely; he would be strong enough if he were in

love with a different woman, but he is not a match for her. It is not her fault, neither is it his fault. She is a superb girl in some ways. She is as high and on as sure foundations as the Boston State House; but she is as narrow as Boston streets. Can't you see what will happen? She will go on having her own way and loving him less and less, in inverse ratio, and he will grow more and more reserved, and absorbed in his profession, and finally shut all his thoughts away from her. They will live separate lives. If they have children she will be devoted to them, and they will adore her, and John will be more left out in the cold than ever. Does nobody else see all this?" she demanded. "Do their friends all think it a good match simply because he has money and amiability, and she beauty and ability?"

"Every one approves; and they certainly appear to have no regrets themselves."

"Look out, Janet! you are scorching your dress. Well, if they are happy, it is n't any business of mine. The world is full of lunatics, and John Graham is the kind of man who is bound to make a failure of his life in one way or another; whereas Mary belongs to the small, but wise minority. She will not break her heart. It is n't on her account that I mind. In whatever circumstances Mary finds herself, she is as sure of coming to the top eventually as cream is certain of rising to the top of the milk-pan."

The problem of life did not grow any easier when viewed from the tranquil protection of Miss Janet Brooks's fireside. Janet soon acknowledged to herself that she had made a mistake in coming to a place where there were so many opportunities for

thought. The monotony of the dreary days devoted to sewing and reading was only varied by an occasional drive to the village or a visit to some neighbor. The beauty of the winter landscape sometimes thrilled her through and through, but always left on her mind a profound melancholy. This cold, stern northern winter was so pitiless. There was scarcely a farmer who did not have to struggle through the brief summer to wring a living from the grudging soil, only to have his labor almost nullified by the months of frost. The life of nearly every family was darkened by the death of one or more of its members, and in a place of so little external excitement the shadow had spread until it had covered the whole community. The sorrows of others came home to Janet with such vividness that for the time being they were hers. She was weighed down, not alone with her own unhappiness, but with the thought of the misery existing in the world.

At the end of the third week of her visit, Janet knew that she must begin to think of going home. She had received more than one reproachful letter from Mary, who reminded her how short the time was before her marriage, and who threatened to send John for her if she did not soon appear. She must stay a little longer, however, until she was strong enough to feel sure of not breaking down in some childish way before John and Mary. Anything was better than yielding to them through sheer weakness and inability to struggle any longer. Her aunt was worried by her pale face and listlessness, and one day on their way to the village she insisted that her niece should stop and see Dr. Warren while she and Job drove on for the mail.

Janet had not seen the doctor alone before. After he had given her a prescription, and told her that her aunt was unnecessarily troubled about her, he turned to her with a hesitancy which was unusual to him.

"Janet," he said, "you know that I have always been as fond of you as if you were my own daughter."

"You are very good."

"I have always wished that you had been married to Alfred before he died, then what I am going to say would seem more natural." The doctor fidgeted uneasily in his chair, and once or twice began to speak, but checked himself. "I want to leave you what little money I have," he said bluntly at last.

"No, no, I could not take it; but you will live a long time, you must not think of such things."

"I have no one who is dependent upon me," he continued, "and so I want to leave my property to the woman who loved my son and who was loved by him."

"Dr. Warren," said Janet, steadily, "you must not think that I do not appreciate your thoughtfulness, but I could never take your money. I must tell you the truth, although it will give you pain. Your son loved some one else best; she was cleverer than I — Oh! I am sorry; I did not think you would care so much. He meant to be true to me. I never knew about it until after his death; he would have married me had he lived."

"Janet, my poor child!" he said, taking her hand in his.

"Don't pity me!" she burst out; "if we had married we should have been miserable. I do not love

him; I stopped loving him so long ago that I feel as if it were not I who cared for him, but some one else; but at last I have forgiven him. Who am I that I should judge him for loving some one else?"

The doctor was frightened by her excited manner. "My poor child, your aunt is right, you are not well; keep calm!" he said nervously.

"Calm!" and Janet snatched away her hand and sprang to her feet. "I am calm enough, Dr. Warren," she added quietly.

"You are not well, Janet; your nervous system is overtaxed in some way."

"I am perfectly well; there is nothing the matter with me. My aunt is coming now, I must go."

"Janet," he said, "what you have told me need make no difference. You loved my son, you would have married him. You have never been engaged again. If he has spoiled your life, the least I can do —"

"I cannot take your money," she cried passionately; "promise me that you will not leave it to me. There must be others —"

"There is no one to whom I care to leave it, Janet. I had set my heart on this. I spoke of it now, because I heard you were feeling somewhat straitened since your father's death, and I thought that the knowledge that this was coming would make things easier."

"Dr. Warren," she said in a trembling voice, "you are a great deal better to me than I deserve. I am not as good as you think. Your son did not spoil my life. I — I could care for some one else."

Miss Janet and Job were at the front gate, and Tracy was pawing the snow impatiently.

"My dear little girl, that need make no difference. If you were to be married to-morrow, I should still be glad to leave you my money."

Janet slipped her arm through his, and looked up with a pleading glance. "I cannot take it; I have n't the slightest claim to it."

"My dear, I do not see why, if I choose —"

"Promise that you will not leave it to me, — promise!" she cried wildly.

"But, my dear child —"

"It would be wicked for me to take it. I could not forgive Alfred when I heard the truth after his death, I was so unjust; and now I have been punished, but I cannot bear the additional punishment of having coals of fire heaped on my head. If you care anything about me, you will promise what I ask."

"I will think about it —"

"No, no, you must not think about it; you must promise here now."

"I will promise."

For the first time Janet had forgiven Alfred Warren with her whole heart.

As she drove home her past and her present confronted each other, and neither of them could any longer be ignored. Her present friendship was a far more absorbing passion than her past love had ever been. It was not until she was face to face with Dr. Warren that she had realized the strength of the feeling which henceforth she must fight against with all her might. Many hard things had come to her in her life, but this was the hardest of all; yet she would conquer, — she must conquer in the end.

## CHAPTER XXII.

But I don't say but what she would be more satisfied in the end; and as long as you can't have happiness in this world, I say you had better have satisfaction.

WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS.

ONE afternoon two or three days later, as Janet and her aunt were sitting over their books, they heard the sound of approaching sleigh-bells.

"Some one is coming here," said Miss Janet, going to the window; "I can't tell who he is at this distance."

"Oh," thought Janet, "it must be John! Mary has sent him for me."

Miss Brooks went to the door herself after the hospitable fashion of Hilltown, and a moment later ushered in — Charles Otis. Janet had a mingled feeling of keen disappointment and relief. When she had recovered from her surprise, she was unaffectedly glad to see him. Miss Brooks slipped out of the room after a few moments, leaving the young people to themselves. Charles had never looked handsomer nor more incongruous with his surroundings. He seated himself by Janet's side on the slippery hair-cloth sofa.

"Your friends began to think you had buried yourself here for the rest of your life," he said. "Why were you so cruel, not to say so foolish, as to come to this God-forsaken place?" He glanced critically about the room as he spoke.

"I was tired, and I wanted a change; and I love everything about this town and this dear old house," she said with quick partisanship.

Charles shrugged his shoulders. "Do you know," he began abruptly, "I have heard it rumored that you don't want to live with Mary and Jack? I can quite sympathize with you. I understand your feelings perfectly. They are not a particularly lively pair, and at the best it is hard to be a third person when one has been used to a home of one's own."

"Yes," she said.

"Janet," he continued nervously, "what do you suppose I have come all this way for in this zero weather?"

"It was very good of you to come, Charles," she said, her face dimpling with some inward amusement. "I don't think you could have given a greater proof of friendship."

"Friendship! See here, Janet, you need not laugh; it is no laughing matter."

"Let me laugh; it is so long since I have laughed that it does me good. If you only could have seen yourself as you looked a few moments ago, blandly sitting in that horse-hair rocking-chair, and praising all the things to Aunt Janet that I know you detest,— snow, pine-woods, and country in winter, — you would laugh too. I felt like exclaiming, 'Fortunate snow! you little know how you are honored.'"

"Janet, what a child you are!"

"I will just mention in passing that I was a very grave and sedate person before you came; my levity is wholly the effect of contact with you."

"Janet," he said, taking the hand that was nearest to him, and clasping it firmly, "what you said last

summer has not discouraged me at all. I know I can make you happy. I have come here to suggest a solution to all your difficulties."

"Oh, Charles!" She tried to draw her hand away, but he held it fast.

"Dearest, don't you see how in every way it is the best thing that you can do? We should be so happy."

"You know I told you last summer, Charles —" she began.

"I know what you told me then; but it is not last summer, and things are different. You had a happy home then. A woman never can be really happy unless she has a home of her own. I told you then that I did not mind if you did n't love me in any romantic fashion, and I will repeat it." He let her hand go of his own accord now that she had ceased to struggle to get it away.

"Janet," he continued, "if I were an indifferent spectator, I should advise you to do it. Any indifferent spectator would say on the face of it that it would be better for you to have a home of your own than to be dependent on your brother-in-law."

He saw her wince at these words, and pursued his advantage. He gave a minute recapitulation of the merits of his scheme, and then his voice changed and softened: "Janet, how can you hesitate? If I did not love you — oh, Janet!" She had never seen him so eager about anything.

"I will not speak of my own feeling for you," he began humbly, "because if you do not love me that will not make any difference."

Janet was touched. She had never felt more desperately in need of affection. "How pleasant it

would be to make some one happy!" she thought. "How restful to stop struggling, and drift with the tide!" Whether it would be possible to marry one man if one loved another; what a way of escape it would be if she could only do it! how good Charles was in spite of his affectations! — all these thoughts rushed tumultuously through her mind. She looked up at him shyly.

"You are too good to me," she said. "I have too much conscience to do as you ask. I have nothing to give."

"I only ask for what you can give. Shall we call it decided?" he added beseechingly.

"No," she said, "I must have time to think."

"Don't think; trust your impulse. You have always liked me?"

"Yes, always."

"You know what I am; I shall not change. Perhaps you think, because I have liked so many girls, I am inconstant; but this is quite another feeling. I did not care for any of them as I care for you."

"I know that you are not inconstant. I am sure that you would be devoted to the woman you married; but she ought to be a different girl from me,— some one who would love you more than she had ever loved any one else. I could not do that."

"Janet, it is impossible that you can keep on loving a fellow who was never worthy of you. I am not afraid of my rival." He gave a happy little laugh. "Poor Alfred! it was hard that he should have died when he had everything to live for. We have everything to live for, — you and I, Janet."

She shook her head.

"Janet," he said, after a pause, "I have planned

taking an architectural tour through England this summer, to the cathedral towns."

"What a delightful thing to do!"

"It will be delightful if you will go with me. We could be married soon after Mary and Jack, say the last of April, and then sail early in May, and be gone all summer." He descanted upon this plan at some length. "Janet," he concluded, "do say yes! I love you so much, and I shall be contented with anything that you can give me," he reiterated.

An hour before, Janet had felt that there was no possible happiness in life for her. The sudden lightening of her spirits, caused by Charles's presence, was intoxicating. Could it not be right to grant the request of this kind friend who asked so little? Why should one be utterly miserable, because one could not be perfectly happy, when there was a medium course at one's command? Were not compromises with fate ever justifiable? In what better way could she crush out the love that it was a sin to feel? Although she could not have a romantic affection for Charles, they were excellent friends, and his temperament, while it occasionally irritated her, would be in some respects a rest. "He would be easy to live with," she thought, "for he is interested in trifles, and trifles make up the sum of most women's lives."

When Janet bade Charles good-night, she told him that she would give him a decided answer in the morning. "You must not mind too much if I do not promise what you want me to promise," she added wistfully.

"I shall not give up, if you don't," he returned cheerfully. "I shall hang on, and appear at the next

convenient opportunity; so to save yourself trouble, you had better say yes at once."

After Janet went to her room that evening, she looked at the situation again and again, from every point of view. She could find no comfort in any of the possibilities of the future if she did not marry Charles. The thought of becoming a nurse in a hospital, even if she were strong enough, which was more than doubtful, seemed to her too hard; the dreary building and the sickening odor of disinfectants came back to her vividly, together with the painful glimpse of suffering which she had seen.

"I will give Charles the promise that he wants," she said to herself at last. "I am not very heroic; I cannot bear this loneliness and misery. I am going to take what comfort I can get. Other girls do such things, and marriages of that kind often turn out happily. Oh, it is such a relief to have decided!" The future, as she saw it, although in sober colors, was not without its attractions. Her ill-health, which had fostered a tendency to indolence, together with the long strain that she had been having, made her set an undue value on external comfort and temporary internal calm. Her nature was one that preferred to be led rather than to lead; and the idea of submitting her will to Charles's, and not having to make any more decisions for herself, was restful. But above all, she was deeply stirred by his affection for her, the depth of which she estimated by her own warm feelings.

Before she went to sleep, she pictured herself as announcing her engagement to the family. Mary would be delighted. Greta would laugh, but she would be pleased; and Emily and Sam, — they would

not understand it, but they would be glad to see her happy; and as for John, — Janet buried her face in the pillow, as if to get away from the look in his questioning eyes. "He does not like Charles, and has never done him justice," she thought. "He will wonder why I love him, but he will never doubt that I do love him; he has too much faith in me for that. If I could tell him everything, what would he say? I could never hope for any more affection from him if he knew all; I should forfeit his respect. He has such inconveniently high ideals! As Mary says, he is unpractical. He would say — oh, I know very well what he would say — that what I propose to do is not fair to Charles. That the fact that it is wrong for me to love some one else, does not make it right for me to marry Charles; that at least I must be frank with him in the beginning and tell him all about my feeling for — some one else. I cannot do that, I will not do it; it is impossible to tell Charles the truth."

She could lie still no longer, but sprang up and began to pace the room. "John would say that I am making a great mistake; I don't care if I am." She locked her hands tightly together, and tried to crowd back her accusing thoughts. "I am as anxious to play Patience on a Sunday as I ever was," she thought, with a little smile. "I never could bear to be wretched; I will play the whole game through to the end."

John's words came back to her, — "No, you will not; you will put up the cards."

She remembered vividly that summer morning in the Lakes, when she had told John the story of her mother's death. She saw again the quiet silver

sheet of water with the solemn trees around it and the starry lilies on its surface. She could breathe once more that delicious air; she could feel the peace and the calm which had so penetrated her that she had felt it would be impossible not to be the better for it all her life. She recalled her feelings when she was listening to Beethoven's Fifth Symphony; then she was sure she would be willing to endure whatever pain might come to her as the consequence of a temperament like hers; and she, in the face of all this, had been ready to stifle her better instincts, for the sake of a temporary cessation of pain! She saw with compelling clearness that no euphonious terms could make it right for her to marry a man whom she did not love. If she did so, it would be at her own peril, in the knowledge that she was bartering the peace of her soul for a life of worldly prosperity and ease.

"I cannot marry Charles," she said. "Oh, why can't I do it, for every other way is so hard? Poor Charles! but it will be easier for him in the end."

She lighted her lamp and penned a few hasty lines, telling him of her decision, and saying that it was irrevocable, and begging him not to try to see her again before she went home, as it would only cause them both needless pain.

After this was accomplished, she had a feeling of peace which she had not known for weeks. She was sure that the strength would be given her to live her life, and that some way would be opened to her.

Charles did come again in spite of her note, but he was received by Janet's aunt.

"My niece is not well enough to see any one to-

day," Miss Brooks said; "she has taken a severe cold in some way."

Charles flushed hotly, but his native courtesy did not desert him, nor his flow of language, and he asked for some paper and a pen and ink, in his blandest manner. The letter that he wrote to Janet she found characteristic throughout. The beginning touched her, but she was exasperated before she reached the end, by his determined refusal to give up hope.

"Janet," her aunt asked with interest, "you are not going to marry that man?"

"What man?"

"You know well enough, — that Mr. Otis."

"No, Aunt Janet."

Her aunt gave a sigh of relief. "I am glad; for although he is pretty, and seems sweet, I would rather have my nieces, as well as my nephews, marry some one who is something more than pretty and sweet."

## CHAPTER XXIII.

Characters are not made by sudden explosions, though many aspects may remain unperceived till opportunity draws them out of the shade.

P. Lanfrey.

HER niece's indisposition was not a fiction on Miss Brooks's part, as Charles would have known had he been more familiar with that lady's uncompromising truthfulness. Janet had not escaped unharmed from her midnight vigil. Her cold was a serious one. Her aunt sent her to bed, and summoned the doctor. He ordered her to stay upstairs for the present, and Miss Brooks devoted herself to her assiduously. It was a relief to Janet to be in bed, and under the dominion of a strong will. In the afternoon she received a letter from Mary. It ran as follows: —

My dear Janet, — I have some news for you that will trouble you very much. I will try to give you more preparation than I had myself. It is something connected with John, something which we neither of us could have foreseen. The first warning I had was when he went to New York. He looked unusually grave when he left me, and after bidding me good-by, he came back and did it all over again.

Janet had reached the bottom of the page, and a hundred fancies, each more grim than the other, flooded her mind. She turned the sheet at last with trembling fingers and read on.

I could see that he was anxious about something, and I think he tried to prepare me then, but as usual he could not bear to give me pain. It would have been easier for me had he told me. Two days later a letter came from him saying that he had lost a large part of his fortune through the dishonesty of one of his trustees, Mr. Axford, who was left in sole charge of the estate after the death of the other trustee, Mr. Price.

John's uncle, wishing the money to stay in the family, had tied up the principal, as perhaps you know, lest his nephew should be tempted to follow in Tolstoi's footsteps, I suppose. I cannot tell you what a trial this is to me. Of course it involves giving up the house on Commonwealth Avenue, and living in a very simple way. John is going to write more fully after his plans for the future are formed, and when he knows the exact amount of his losses. Come home as soon as possible, for I want to talk things over with you. In haste to catch the mail,

Your loving sister,

MARY MACL. B.

Three days later a second letter came, enclosing one from John. Janet read Mary's first.

MY DEAR JANET, — John's losses are much more serious than he thought when I last wrote. He is to go permanently to Galveston, Texas, where he is to be in partnership with his friend Stephen Hubbard, George Hubbard's older brother. He has offered to release me from my engagement, but at the same time he has made it almost impossible for me to break it, by dwelling on his affection for me, and by saying that this loss of fortune is nothing to him, if only he has me. He is so unpractical! Having me does not insure us clothes and food and a few other trifles of that sort. He thinks it so simple and cheerful to go to Texas! He is only sorry on my account. He cannot understand my feelings, because he is so fond of the West. There is not enough of his

fortune left to increase his income greatly. However, he will earn enough to support himself and me in a simple way, as he has a good opening, and Stephen Hubbard is an energetic man of business.

Even in this crisis John has shifted all the responsibility on me. If he would only insist that I should follow him to Texas, I should do so, because I always submit to the inevitable. If, on the other hand, he would break the engagement definitely, there would be no perplexity for me.

I know all this sounds cold, dear Janet; but in truth I am far from heartless. I have never been so upset by anything in my life. I long for your sympathy and judgment. My heart aches every time I think of John, and I cannot bear to hurt him or to make him think me mercenary. In truth the loss of the money is the least objectionable feature of the affair. Were John as rich as ever to-morrow, but definitely committed to Texas, I should find it almost impossible to sever my connection with Boston and my family and all my friends. You know I detest the West. Come home, dear child, and tell me what I ought to do. It would be a terrible thing to break my engagement, and yet I cannot go alone with John Graham to the wilds of Texas. If you will go with us, I think I could make up my mind to the thought of that dreary place. Together, you and I could be cheerful anywhere. I will send you John's exasperatingly characteristic epistle.

Janet turned to his letter eagerly. "How he does love her!" she thought, awed by the strength of feeling that seemed to shine through his simple words. "How could she let me read this! She must not break her engagement; if she does, she will break his heart."

Weak as she was, she rose and dressed herself in feverish haste. There was just time to catch the

afternoon train for Boston. She would go to Texas with them, indeed she would, if that were the only means of keeping Mary steadfast to her promise. All her former reasons for not living with them were cancelled by this great crisis.

Her aunt came in, as she was putting on her hat. "Janet Brooks," she said, "are you about to start for a lunatic asylum? There is no other destination suitable for you, if you go out on such a day."

The wind was drifting the falling snow in masses against the window. In every direction was a white world, for the snow was so dense that it cut off the view of all else. Janet had forgotten the weather.

"Take off your hat and jacket and lie down again at once!" commanded Miss Brooks; and Janet, too weak to argue the point, obeyed.

"Now tell me what you were proposing to do."

She gave a brief history of the events that had happened, and explained that she must go home to try to influence Mary.

"You are not to go home, Janet, much less are you to banish yourself to Texas. If Mary does not love John Graham well enough to go there alone with him, let her give him up; but as to dragging you there with her, to share a life which strikes her as too dreary for herself, even with her husband's love, — she shall not do it. Humph! I have no patience with her!"

"It will not be a dreary life; I shall like it."

"Yet you did not choose to live with them in Boston."

"That was a different matter. They did not need me then; now they do. I am afraid Mary will break

her engagement unless I promise to go with her. It will kill John if she does."

"You use strong language. For my part, I am equally sure that she will kill him if she marries him, and that outlook seems to me the more hopeless of the two. Don't take the work of Providence out of the hands of Providence, Janet. Mary has made her own bed; let her lie in it, or give it up. If she loved John Graham, would she hesitate about marrying him? If she does not love him, are you willing to take the responsibility of such a marriage?"

"At least he would think he was happy," said Janet; "and perhaps he would be happy, for such love as his must awaken a response after a while. But I have a feeling that she may love him already more than she lets the world see."

"Very well, then let her marry him. If she does love him, this trial will bring them together as nothing else would. In any case it is not your responsibility. Your life seems to me of equal value with John Graham's, and neither he nor Mary would thank you for losing it in an effort to reconstruct theirs."

While Janet was breathlessly expecting further news from her sister, John was awaiting Mary's decision with feverish impatience. Finally, when a number of days had passed without any further word from her, he could bear the suspense no longer, but took the train for Kingshaven. As he crossed the common in the little town, he noticed absently that the boys were merrily snow-balling one another, and that some of them were the same who had

been playing ball there on that happy morning after his engagement, when he had found Mary among the roses.

He entered the familiar brown house, and then waited in the parlor with gathering trepidation; and as the slow moments passed, he had the feeling that he had been expecting her for half his lifetime, and would continue to wait there fruitlessly through all eternity. At last he heard a light footstep and the subdued rustle of a gown; then the door was opened and she came in.

"Won't you sit down?" she asked formally, as if he were a stranger. There were two chairs by the window, and she took one; but he remained standing before her, with folded arms.

"I had hoped to hear from you before this," he said at length, breaking an oppressive silence.

"I wrote three days ago, and sent my letter to the old address, which was the only one I knew."

"I was in such confusion that I must have forgotten to send you the right address," he said.

There was a long pause, during which Mary had a sickening certainty that a scene was inevitable. At last she spoke.

"If you had sent me your address, you would have spared both yourself and me some unnecessary pain," she said slowly. "Cannot you imagine what was in that letter without my telling you?" She had turned her face away from him, and was looking out of the window. She sat in her old position, with her head thrown back a little, and her hands clasped against her black dress. Graham glanced absently at the smooth dark masses of her hair, and noted the purity of her profile, and the sweep of her eyelashes against

her cheek. The very folds of her gown had caught something of her rigidity.

"I know what was in that letter," he said; "you need not tell me."

It was a relief to Mary that he took it so quietly. She turned to look at him. A blaze of winter sunlight was shining through the window, bringing with it glaring reflections from the snow-covered roof opposite; and as the light fell on John's face, it brought out all the sad and careworn lines.

"There is such a glare," she said, pulling down the curtain.

"Yes, I have had too much light suddenly."

"You ought to have known me well enough to understand how impossible it would be for me to leave all my friends. Did it never occur to you when you offered me my freedom that I might take it?"

"Yes, it did occur to me," he answered quietly.

"If you foresaw it, why do you take it in this way? It is a natural thing for me to do; it is inevitable."

"Yes, it is both natural and inevitable."

"Why don't you say something?" she exclaimed vehemently. "Do you blame me for not being willing to sacrifice everything I hold most dear, for the sake of a promise made when all the conditions were different? Do you blame me for loving my sisters and my old friends too well to leave them, and all that makes life worth the living? If you choose to hold me to my promise, I will keep it," she added, with a touch of *hauteur*. "If you bid me, I will go through with everything unflinchingly."

"Mary, I have no wish to hold you to your promise."

"Then why did n't you make it easier for me?" she broke out. "Why did you write to tell me that the loss of your fortune was nothing if only you had me?"

"I have learned a great deal in the last five minutes," he began. Then he paused. "It has all been a mistake from the beginning," he went on. "We have been in false relations to each other from the very first. I ought to have seen it; I did see it, but I tried to persuade myself that it was not so. In my heart I knew that you did not love me, in spite of what you said, and I ought to have realized that you could not love me."

"I never pretended to have a romantic affection for you, John. I told you that I did not believe in that kind of thing, but I should have been very happy with you if I could have stayed near my friends. Don't look at me so reproachfully! You know that I was perfectly open and honest with you. I liked you, as I told you, and I had the greatest respect for you, which is a much better foundation for married happiness than an idle fancy; and every one said that it would be such a good thing, and the family were all so much pleased with you; — most marriages are made in this way!"

"If so, Heaven help the married people!"

"You are an idealist, whereas I am practical. You think that certain vague sensations and fancies are the most important things in life; but we live in a world of realities, not of shadows, and therefore things are of more importance than ideals. Look at the case impartially; imagine me taken from civilization, and stranded in a place where there is no agreeable society, and where you and I consequently would be wholly dependent upon each other, with

none of the friends who drew us together, and with no means of gratifying our common tastes. It would be as hard for you as for me."

"You are right in saying that things are of greater value than ideals," said Graham. "Things have the advantage of being tangible and always attainable, provided we choose to pay their price; whereas such rubbish as sympathy, compatibility, and unchanging affection is elusive, — we may chase after these in vain for a whole lifetime. Let us be practical, by all means."

Mary had an uncomfortable sense of inferiority. It was something new for John to take this tone with her. She had never liked him so much as now, when she was to lose him forever. The unwavering, unchanging love that might have been hers through her life was gone, and could nevermore return. John saw her at last without any veil of illusions. She had always hoped that this time would come, yet now she had an unexpected sense of loss.

"This is what your blind love has brought you to," she said. "If you had only begun with a reasonable affection for me, you would be spared half your pain now."

Graham grew a shade paler. "This is what your engagement of reason has brought you to," he returned. "Had you refused me in the beginning, we should both have been spared — everything." He started to leave the room; then he remembered that he had not bidden her good-by. He came back and seized both her hands.

"You have a warm heart," he said; "the day will come when you will discover it. Some more fortunate

man — " He pressed her hands to his lips and turned abruptly away.

" I hope we shall always be friends," she said.

" Friends ! Friendship is as impossible for us as it is for oil and water to mix ; there is no foundation to base a friendship on. We might have been lovers, but we never could have been friends."

In another moment he was gone. Mary was weighed down by a sense of her own lack of generosity and her lover's unhappiness. It was easy enough to give him up when she was coldly contemplating the situation and he was far away ; but his bodily presence proved a most disturbing factor in the case. His haggard, worn face appealed to her. He looked so wretchedly ill. The protecting instinct was strongly developed in her, and she longed to make him comfortable. Who would take care of him in that isolated region? The keen pity that she felt was the strongest emotion that she had ever known. She had to summon all her knowledge of herself to her aid. She must not be carried away by a temporary access of feeling, but must force herself to think of the joyless years that awaited her if she severed her connection with her kindred and friends. Yet she must part with her lover in more kindly fashion.

" John," she called, — " John, come back ! " She held out her hand with a pleading gesture quite unusual with her. " Will you not forgive me? " she begged.

" There is nothing to forgive."

" John, if you insist upon it, if you think best, I will — I will not break my engagement. It would be possible to postpone our marriage, hoping that

something better might turn up. Perhaps some day you might come back to the East, or I might — I might even go to the West."

"Mary," he said, "you do not love me. Nothing can ever change that fact. There could never be any true harmony between us. It is best to give it all up now. Whatever pain it may cause us both, is nothing compared to the life-long misery of an ill-assorted union. It is not a question of riches or poverty, or of east or west. We are as far apart as the east is from the west, in every way. It is not only that our whole training and point of view are different, but there is an ineradicable difference in our characters." He paused. The softness in Mary's face had shaken his resolution. Even in the full knowledge of their incompatibility, he had a wild, unreasoning wish to keep her upon any terms, notwithstanding the unrest and unhappiness that would be the portion of both of them if he did so.

For one moment they stood looking at each other sombrely. Mary felt the sure and comfortable foundations of her matter-of-fact and pleasant world giving way. She, who had been used to living on the surface and who distrusted any emotion, was suddenly, against her will, made one of the central figures in a tragedy. She wished that John had been a different man or that she were a different woman, that she might love him; but the hopelessness and pity of it all was that they were what they were.

"If you say so, I will go with you," she said, raising her eyes once again to his, those eyes which always had the power of stirring him to his heart's core.

"No, I must not. I should despise myself if — If I were weak enough to take advantage of your impulse of pity, I should consciously be letting you lay up a future of unhappiness."

"How well you know me!" she murmured.

"At last," he said, — "yes, I have reason to know you well at last."

## CHAPTER XXIV.

It is hard to believe long together that anything is "worth while," unless there is some eye to kindle in common with our own, some brief word uttered now and then to imply that what is infinitely precious to us is precious alike to another mind.

GEORGE ELIOT.

A FEW months later, John Graham was again in Boston to finish winding up his affairs there before going to Texas. He went to Kingshaven also, to spend an evening with his aunt. Mrs. Otis saw as soon as she looked at her nephew that life had not grown any easier for him, and that his love for Mary was deeper than she had fancied. She greeted him with the news that the Brookses were all to sail for Europe in a few days with Miss MacLinton, to be gone a year or more. Mary was the only one of the sisters who was at home at present, for Janet had gone to Hilltown to bid her aunt good-by, and Greta was in Beverly with her cousin. Mrs. Otis had never alluded to John's broken engagement, and the consciousness of the open secret between them had grown more and more oppressive to her. At last she let her knitting fall in her lap and gave her nephew a long, steady gaze. The expression of his face smote her to the heart, and his very reserve increased her sympathy.

"Jack," she said at last, "I wish I could marry you." Then they both laughed rather forlornly. "If Texas was not quite so far off, and I had not so many ties here, I would gladly go with you."

"That is what Mary said," he observed.

Mrs. Otis picked up her knitting, and travelled across her needles several times. "Jack," she began nervously, "don't break your heart over Mary Brooks. If you had married her, her lack of imagination would have jarred on you at every turn, whereas she would have been driven frantic by your indifference to externals. You are trying enough, Jack, even to me. Mary would make an admirable wife for almost any other man, she is so practical and such an ideal housekeeper; but all this capacity would have been wasted on you, who prefer the wrong way of doing a thing whenever it saves trouble. You have your virtues, however, my poor boy, and you could make any other woman divinely happy. I wish —"

"I am not surprised that you can imagine no future more brilliant for a woman than to join her lot to mine. It is strange that Mary did not choose it!"

"Jack, I cannot bear to see you growing cynical. If Mary had been in love with you, she would have found any future brilliant enough if shared with you. Greta, for instance, has tried to persuade Mary to let her give up Europe, because she does not want to be separated from Carl; they had hoped to be married this summer, poor children! Janet is on their side; — by the way, she was very unhappy over the breaking of Mary's engagement; she is such an ardent creature herself that she cannot understand anything short of whole-souled devotion."

At this point Emily and Sam Randolph entered the room. They had come to help Mary shut up the house, and they had learned that John was across the way at his aunt's. They both urged him

to stay with them for a few days in Boston, and made him promise that he would never visit the East without coming to them.

"The children are broken-hearted to think that you are going away, John," Emily said. "In fact Sally burst into tears, and asked me if I did n't suppose you would like to 'indopt' a little girl."

"She was only pacified by my suggesting that she would have to leave all her friends, and give up the joys of the Public Garden and her school," Sam added.

"Yes," said John; "leaving Boston is an insuperable objection."

As Emily and Sam were walking across the Common after leaving Mrs. Otis's, Sam indulged in a tirade against Mary's heartlessness. "How could she throw over that fine fellow," he demanded, "for a mere question of money too! I would n't have believed her capable of such cold-bloodedness."

"Sam, it was n't the loss of fortune; it was the distance that she would have to put between herself and all of us, that made her discover that she had never really cared for him."

Sam gave a low whistle, and presently he began to laugh. "It is n't an unusual experience, Emily, for a man to be cut out by a rival; but John's rival is certainly a most original one. It is a case of 'Love *versus* Boston;' and Boston, *dear* Boston, has won the day, —

> 'Not that she loved *Graham* less,
> But that she loved *Boston* more.'"

John spent the night in his old quarters in town. Dearly as he loved his aunt, it was a relief to be out

of the reach of her well-meant but wholly inadequate sympathy. His dismantled rooms in Charles Street were sufficiently full of memories of the past, but silence reigned there. It seemed strange to him that his friends should so little understand the strength of his feeling for Mary, when the wound that he had received was as far from being cured as it had ever been. His old foe, depression, had made a successful attack upon him; and the future as he saw it was in sombre grays, with no lighter touch of color to relieve it.

Much has been said upon the benefit of adversity, yet the fact remains that some natures are injured by it. A self-distrustful person requires the fostering sunshine of prosperity to ripen his character into its full perfection.

Graham felt restless and old. He tried to read, that he might drown thought. He fell asleep in his chair at last, and awoke with a start. His fire was out, and his lamp was burning low. It must be long past midnight. He went to the window to close the shutters. The moon was shining brightly over the water, and the scene was one of absolute quiet. The busy town across the river was peacefully sleeping, and the little boats, dimly revealed in the track of the moon, were resting too. There is something solemn in an unexpected glimpse of beauty, and it came to Graham with the force of a revelation for his eyes alone. He was awed and humbled as he turned away from the window. He looked at life with a wider vision, and felt that he was a small part of a great whole.

As he was putting out his lamp some letters caught his eye that he had overlooked hitherto.

Among them he found one from Janet Brooks. He read as follows: —

My dear John, — I wanted to write to you three months ago, but I knew too well what an intrusion any words are in the first bitter days. Even now I hesitate about writing. I had hoped that I might see you and find it easier to speak. As there is no longer any chance of that, I feel that I must send you a little message, before going so far away in space and time.

After all, I can only say how sorry I am, and one thing more. It is this, — that I cannot feel as hopeless for you as I should for another in your place. If your life is spoiled for yourself, at least it will not be spoiled for others. You will not grow hard or bitter, or be any less a comfort to your friends. There must be a little consolation in being a banyan-tree of the forest. I have thought of what you said that summer night so many times.

Very truly yours, Janet Brooks.

There was still one more day before Graham was obliged to start for Texas, and he spent it in going to Hilltown. When he reached the old red farm-house, Miss Janet Brooks the elder greeted him with unusual warmth. She insisted that he should spend the night at her house, instead of staying at the village inn.

"You will find Janet behind the barn, where she has taken her book," she said in response to a question of his. He made his way past the back porch, with its deep trimming of grape-vines and its rows of shining milk-pans, and then through the farm-yard, where a group of brown hens with their families of all-pervasive chickens were thoroughly enjoying life. The doors of the barn were open, and revealed a

wealth of new-mown hay, and a framed picture of low hills and tree-dotted meadows. Janet had made a nest for herself in the high, unmown grass. The white daisies and deep pink clover were scattered lavishly around her; and as she watched them from her lowly vantage-ground, she had a sense of friendliness and neighborliness. The bees buzzed about the clover, and some yellow butterflies flitted past. The sky was a deep blue, softened by masses of fluffy clouds; and there was only a breath of wind, just enough to keep awake the sensitive aspen, which quivered gently, and showed first its dark and then its bright side, as if it were the epitome of life. Janet sat motionless, with her eyes on the book in her lap, and she neither saw nor heard Graham as he approached.

"Janet!" he said; and she looked up.

The color rushed into her face and then receded. There was a touch of the Brooks coldness in her voice as she greeted him. "I thought you were in Texas," she said. "It is an unexpected pleasure to see you."

Presently she suggested a walk to the woods, which lay beyond the meadow. Graham and she crossed the fields, which were white with daisies. "Are n't they lovely?" she asked, stopping to pick some, and putting them through the black ribbon that encircled the waist of her white gown. "The farmers detest them because they spoil the grass. How strange it must be always to regard things from a utilitarian point of view! I wonder how daisies look to people who are thinking about their crops."

"They miss a great deal, — those people," Graham said.

At last they reached the woods, and they sat down on a fallen tree-trunk to rest.

"How did you ever think of anything so nice as coming here to see me?" Janet demanded.

"Do you think it 'nice'? I am glad; it is very good of you. When I read your letter, I felt that I must see you; and this was my only chance, as I start for Texas to-morrow. I wanted to thank you for your letter; you don't know how much good it did me," he added abruptly.

She was looking down, and her broad hat shaded her face so that he could not see the color that came into it at his words. "I was so sorry," she began. "But I could n't say half what I wanted to; I never can. It seemed such a frightful thing that at first I felt as if I could not bear it."

"I do not blame your sister; the mistake was mine in not understanding her character in the beginning." He hesitated; then continued slowly: "How many times I have felt, when I was away from her, that we were unsuited to each other, and that I could never make her happy; but at the sight of her beautiful face I was as blind as ever. The personality of some women completely overrules one's sober judgment. I dare say I should be as much of a fool as ever if I were to see her again."

"I don't believe one can ever get over such a strong feeling," Janet said in a low tone. The hat still shaded her face.

"I am glad you are going to Europe," John said, after a little pause. "It is what you have always wanted to do. I like to have my friends get what they want (and it is very seldom that it happens in

this disappointing world, by the way), and you deserve to have nothing but happiness."

He took out a pencil and a notebook, and began to jot down some of the out-of-the-way places that she must be sure to go to in Europe. He wished that he could turn to personalities again. He had felt diffident when he had tried to thank her for her letter. He had meant to tell her that he did not in the least deserve her good opinion, but that he hoped to be worthier of it by and by.

It was tea-time all too quickly, and John went through the wood-path by Janet's side with an unexpected feeling of remoteness. She was so near him that her gown brushed against him, and yet she seemed much farther away than when he had read her letter. For some reason, he was no longer the recipient of her confidences. After all, he rather liked to be treated as a sympathetic, elderly uncle.

They had emerged from the woods, and were crossing the meadow now. This was the last five minutes in which he could have her to himself for — how long?

"I wish I could see your face when you first catch a glimpse of Belgian roofs," he said. "But I forget; you are to land in England. Well, you will find England sufficiently amusing."

Janet reiterated her desire to see England, and John lost the greater part of what she was saying. They were half-way across the last field now.

"There is Aunt Janet watching for us; I am afraid we are very late," Janet said.

"Janet," he began, "won't you be a little good to me? You know how so well. I can't bear the

impersonal way in which you have been talking to me. Is a friendship like ours to be given up because — because of what has happened? Won't you write to me sometimes?"

"I am a very poor correspondent," she answered, fingering the daisies at her belt.

"I know that is not true."

"I have promised to write to so many people."

"Very well," he returned coldly; "as you please."

"I will write to you," she responded quickly.

They were close by the red farm-house now, and Miss Janet came out to meet them. "The potatoes are spoiled, and the cream-toast has become a 'mush of concession;' but it is your own fault," she said.

That evening Miss Brooks and John talked upon various abstruse subjects, while Janet sat by in silence. He wondered what she was thinking of, and then he noticed for the first time how pretty she had grown of late. The hours went by, and Miss Brooks talked incessantly, for she was well pleased at having found a listener who was in sympathy with her intellectual pursuits. John continued to glance at Janet from time to time, and noticed at length that she looked tired. Finally she asked a question about electricity, the topic which was uppermost at the moment, which drew down upon her a careful explanation from him.

"I am a hopeless case whenever science is concerned," Janet said, after he had twice tried to make his exposition clear to her. "I am afraid I must leave this brilliant company for the night. I hope you may neither of you ever know the mortification of feeling hopelessly inferior. I suppose there are *very* superior people who would make you feel so,"

she added, turning to Graham with an assumption of childlike simplicity.

"Nonsense, Janet! you know perfectly well that you are not hopelessly inferior," her aunt said. "You have a very good mind; the trouble is that you won't apply it."

"Intellectually, I feel myself a mere worm," she said, turning to take up her kerosene lamp, and smiling back at them over her shoulder.

"Let me light your lamp for you," Graham begged.

"I think you would find it easier to light it if you were to turn up the wick," Janet observed. "It seems so to my common-place mind."

"My dear, it is ridiculous in you to call yourself common-place," said Miss Janet. "You have a most individual personality."

Janet inclined her head thoughtfully to one side, and then looked up at Graham furtively, smiling, and showing her dimples. "An individual personality," she repeated slowly, making a pretence of finding the long words difficult, — "do you consider that a compliment or not?"

"I should consider it a great compliment if I were you," he replied, yielding to her fascination. "Here is the lamp with the wick turned up, since you prefer it so. I shall have to bid you good-by to-night, as I must leave on the six-o'clock train to-morrow morning."

There was a pause, and then Janet said, "So early?"

"Yes."

There was another silence. "I believe I was rash in promising to write to you," Janet began

coldly. "I have so many correspondents. I am going to write careful journal letters to Aunt Janet, and perhaps she will send you news of me from time to time."

He thought that this speech arose from an impulse of coquetry, which was unworthy of so serious a friendship as theirs. In point of fact, she uttered it from an instinct of self-preservation.

"Do you want this lamp, or shall I put it down?" he returned indifferently.

"I will take it now, thank you; good-night, and good-by."

He stepped through the door into the front entry after her. "Janet," he demanded, "do you want to keep up our friendship, or do you not? Will you write to me, or will you not? If you would rather put a stop to our intercourse, then say so frankly; but I do not want any journal letters addressed to another person. If I can't have my own individual letters, I would rather not hear from you at all."

Janet hesitated. "I will write to you," she said at last, "and I shall like to get your letters."

"Good-by," he said, as he kept her hand absently in his. "I hope you will have a fortunate year."

He watched her go slowly up the stairs. The lamp which she held made a bright spot of her slim white figure against the surrounding darkness, and the light seemed all to come from her face. She glanced at him shyly when she reached the square landing, and the mischievous gleam of a few moments before had left her eyes.

"Janet," he said, stepping up to the railing which separated them,— "Janet, it is a hard thing to part with our friends, and I have n't any too many." She

was a little above him, but it was possible to take possession of her hand. "Oh, my child, I can never thank you enough for all the good that you have done me from the very first, and for your letter. In fact, I can't thank you enough for being in the world. Such a woman as you keeps alive one's faith in the best things. You did not mean that you would rather not write to me, — that because you have so many friends, you have n't a little corner of your warm heart to spare for me?"

"No, I did not mean it. Forgive me, I am not myself to-night. I am not quite strong yet. It would not be easy to give up a friendship like ours."

"It would be impossible." He dropped her trembling little hand, and in another moment she was lost to view; the patch of light gradually receded, and he was left alone in the darkness below.

## CHAPTER XXV.

What a woman will do no man can tell, though he fancies he knows her thoroughly.

R. D. Blackmore.

SIXTEEN months later John Graham was again in Kingshaven, for a brief week. He had come to New York on business, and was able to spare a little time for his aunt.

They sat together on one of the last evenings of his stay, — she with her work, and he with a book, as they had so often done before. She interrupted him freely whenever she had an especially important thought, and in return listened patiently to any extracts which he might choose to read.

"Jack," she said at last, "you have enjoyed your visit, have you not?"

"'Enjoyed' is a strong expression."

She was wondering whether he had come to Kingshaven hoping to see Mary, and had been disappointed at her almost immediate departure for the mountains, or whether his strongest interest now was in Janet. If so, he must feel hurt at her absorption in social gayeties.

"Don't you think the Brookses have all improved in looks?" she began discreetly.

"I saw no difference in Mary; she was as handsome as possible before."

"Greta is more charming than ever," his aunt went on. "She seems toned down, and yet delight-

fully happy; that marriage has turned out well. Miss MacLinton was strongly opposed to the match, and hoped to break it off by taking Greta abroad, but absence did not lessen the young people's love. When a marriage in her family is an established fact, however, the ægis of her all-powerful name protects the new-comer. She cannot say enough in praise of Carl Reinhart now. By the way, what do you think of Janet?"

"She is very pretty," he responded briefly.

"She is immensely improved in poise and manner. She has wholly lost her old shyness; and then it is so becoming to her to be so much less thin and to have more color. She was very much admired abroad. She had never had the usual gayety of a young girl, and she enjoyed it greatly. I wonder that she has escaped being engaged."

John was silent, and apparently deeply absorbed in his book. His aunt was exasperated by his reserve.

"I am surprised that you have not seen more of Janet," she continued; "you and she used to be such good friends."

Still he did not speak.

"I cannot help hoping," she went on, "that Janet will end by making the marriage that would delight me most. She has known him so long, and she is so fond of him, and Charles is so much in love with her." She did not think it fair to look at John when she said this, and consequently received no light.

"It would be a good thing for Charles," he said quietly, after a little pause.

Mrs. Otis wished that her nephew were the hero of

a novel and that she were reading it, for then she would have some chance of knowing what was in his mind. From a selfish point of view her great desire was to have Janet marry Charles, and yet she could not but feel that John was better calculated to make her happy.

"Janet is a dear little girl," she went on; "in a worldly way she could do much better than to marry Charles. But she is not a worldly girl; if she had been she would have engaged herself to a rich Englishman who was in love with her. Miss MacLinton and Mary both liked him extremely."

"It is possible then for a Bostonian to leave Boston for England?"

"Jack, you *are* growing cynical. By the way, you have heard, I suppose, that Janet and Mary are to live with Miss MacLinton as soon as Greta and Carl leave the old house and go into an apartment in town. That will give Janet a gay winter, which she will like; her fondness for society is rather an unexpected departure in her, I must confess."

"My dear aunt, I should suppose that you had acquired sufficient wisdom to cease to feel surprise at any development on the part of a member of your charming sex. They all enjoy ease and admiration, and it is natural that they should."

"But Janet —"

"Well, Janet?"

"She is an exception."

"I have not found her so." John returned to the "Popular Science Monthly" with aggressive decision. His aunt longed to advise him to ask Janet to marry him, but she was too much afraid of him in his present frame of mind to risk it. She

could only kiss him with unusual warmth when she bade him good-night, and see that there were extra blankets on his bed.

When Graham went across the way the next day to bid the Reinharts and Janet good-by, he was told that they had all gone to Beverly to spend a few days with Miss MacLinton. He was glad that he should not see Janet again; at least so he said to himself. In the afternoon he went to see the Randolphs for the last time. He had almost reached their house when he saw a slender girl coming down the steps. If he were sorry to see her, he certainly disguised his sentiments heroically, for he exclaimed joyfully: "Janet, what a lucky chance! I heard that you were in Beverly; so I did n't expect to see you again, for I am going South to-morrow."

"So soon?"

"I thought you knew it."

"You never told me; and you were actually going away without coming to bid me good-by! That was not friendly of you."

"You have n't given me reason to suppose that my movements are of the smallest interest to you. You have grown out of my reach, and belong to another world. What business have you with all these new friends and with this society life," he proceeded violently, — "you who never used to care for society; you who were going to give simple lunches and ask me to them?" He wound up with a little laugh.

"Am I so very much changed?"

"Yes," doubtfully; "yes," with more decision, "you are."

"In what way?"

"Oh, you need n't feel at all disturbed, for every one says that you are immensely improved."

"But you think that I have grown worldly; I have felt it."

"I did n't say so."

"But you do."

"No, you could not be worldly, but your natural unworldliness is overlaid by your desire to please the friends among whom you live. I don't wonder that you care for society; who could help it with your charm?"

Janet colored. "I like it," she admitted.

"Of course you do, and I am glad that you are so happy."

"One learns to be happy," she said; "one has to be happy as one grows older."

"I think I know what you mean," said Graham, "and it is the true philosophy of life."

They had been walking down Mt. Vernon Street, as they talked, and had reached the corner of Charles Street. "Which way are you going?" John asked.

"To Williams and Everett's, to meet Charles Otis, who wants to show me some pictures; but it is early yet."

"You and Charles have grown to be excellent friends."

"We have always been the best of friends."

"I have never been able to see what you can find to like in him," he said irritably.

"There are a great many reasons for liking him; to begin with —"

"I know them all; they have been dinned into my ears from my, or rather his, earliest childhood.

He is so sweet-tempered, and so angelic to his mother, and such a devoted friend. His sweet temper strikes me as having been given him for the express purpose of provoking his quick-tempered friends. As for his devotion to his mother, he is devoted to her on condition that the whole aim of her life shall be to make him happy; and he chooses his friends with the same end in view."

"You are unjust to Charles," she said quietly. "I have had an opportunity to know him thoroughly in the last year. No one could be more thoughtful of us all than he was when we were in England together."

"I am abominably unjust. Charles is a good fellow, one of the salt of the earth. I wish I were half as good as he is, and half as well able to please — those whom I care to please. Janet, you used to be so good to me once; but now — it is very natural. Only you can hardly expect me to be overjoyed that you are as kind to the whole world as you used to be to me. *Yes*, you *have* changed."

"I can see that I am a disappointment to you; please tell me what you really think about me?" she entreated anxiously. "I don't mind being told my faults."

"If I were to tell you what I really think about you," he began, in a tone of repressed feeling. "You need n't be afraid," he added quietly; "I am not going to do it." They walked on for some steps in silence. "You *know* how I feel about you," he began vehemently; "you can't help knowing all that you are to me. I had not meant to say this, but the situation is intolerable. We cannot

go on as we are. I have lost what I once had, — your friendship."

She made a little movement of dissent.

He did not regard it. "I suppose I have lost your friendship because you have seen that my feeling for you has grown into something which you cannot return. Even long ago when I cared for a very different person, you always made me feel that life was 'worth while;' but afterwards — there could be but one ending for me. I want you to know how I feel," he added more calmly, "because it puts us on a fairer footing; you can dictate your own terms. Don't be troubled by what I have said, and don't be afraid to be friends with me for fear I shall misunderstand you. Your friendship is more than I deserve; I know that it would be impossible for you to love me."

"Why do you think it would be impossible?" she asked, with a little tremor in her voice.

"Why?" he returned passionately. "Because I am poor and old and unsuccessful and in exile; because I have none of the qualities that please women; because there is no reason why you should love me, and every reason why you should not."

"Did it never occur to you that perhaps I might — I might love you?" she asked faintly.

"Never in my sane moments. You do not mean — you cannot mean that? Janet," and his voice trembled, "I cannot believe that you mean anything more than that you will be my very good friend. That is a great deal, I know, but just now it seems nothing at all."

Janet looked away from him across the Common, but without seeing it. "I love you," she said

simply. She turned and looked straight at him for an instant, and then dropped her eyes.

"I cannot believe it," he said breathlessly. "It is too wonderful a thing to be true. Don't let your pity for me deceive you!"

Again she looked across the Common. "I have cared for you a long time," she said. "When I am with you, I am happy, it does not matter where we are; and when I am away from you, it is the feeling that you are in the world too, belonging to me in a certain sense, because you are my friend, that makes the best part of all my days. You can call it what you will, — love or friendship. I only know that I am miserable when I think that you are going away, that exile to me means separation from you. Do you believe me now?"

"I believe you."

Three months later John Graham came on from Texas to marry Janet Brooks and take her back with him. Their wedding, which was an evening one, was the most brilliant affair that Kingshaven had ever known. After the ceremony there was a large reception. In fact, the wedding was everything that John and Janet would not have chosen, had they been left to their own devices. "As long as we are doing what our friends disapprove of so strongly," Janet had said with a smile, "the least we can do is to let them arrange our wedding as they like. We are going to please ourselves for the rest of our lives."

The wedding and the reception were over only too quickly. Charles Otis was the last guest to linger; he wanted to talk over the occasion quietly with the family. At church, during the service, he had tried

to fix his attention upon the bridegroom rather than the bride. He noticed how gray Graham was getting, and how old he looked, and he consoled himself by thinking that if Janet could love a man like John Graham, she was not the woman he had fancied her; nevertheless, in spite of his philosophy and his assumed gayety, there was a very genuine ache beneath his immaculate shirt-front. He could not but own that his cousin acquitted himself well; there was nothing which he could criticise except the unnecessary fervor with which he said, "I will." He thought it would have been in better taste to be less emphatic. He and Emily and Sam agreed that a more charming wedding had never taken place.

"How magnificently Carl played the 'Wedding March'!" Greta said. "My one regret about my own wedding is that Carl could n't play the 'Wedding March' for me. I never saw Janet look prettier than she did as she came down the aisle."

"She spoiled the effect by catching her veil on that pew-door," Mary said. "It was so careless of her. But she can't think of anything but John Graham. I never knew a girl so changed by her engagement. You would suppose that her one thought would have been to see as much as possible of her family in the last few days; but since he came on, she has been absorbed in him."

"Did you notice that bank of flowers in front of the pulpit?" Charles asked sweetly. "That was *my* idea."

"Did you observe the old shoe tied on John's trunk?" questioned Sam. "That was *my* idea."

"Samuel Randolph, how could you do such a thing! and they are going to pass through Boston!"

"I'm so sorry! If I had only remembered about Boston, Mary, I would have tied on a polite note, stating that this unrefined joke was perpetrated by a citizen of Hilltown, New Hampshire. I would n't have Boston suppose for a moment that Kingshaven is responsible for it."

Miss MacLinton and Miss Janet Brooks were talking together, meanwhile, in a corner of the room. Miss MacLinton asked patronizing questions in her silvery voice. She was interested in this typical New Englander of the old Puritan stock. Miss Brooks, who took no especial pleasure in being regarded as a type, answered her gentle patronage with curt, pithy phrases.

"I hope Janet and John will have all the happiness which they so richly deserve," Miss MacLinton said amiably at last. "I confess, however, that Galveston, Texas, has a dreary sound."

"A dreary sound! It is the garden of the earth. In my secluded life, which you have been so good as to honor with your interest, I find time to study the geography of my own country, and I can give you all the points which you desire upon the subject of Galveston."

"It is its distance from the East that makes it dreary," Miss MacLinton said conclusively.

"Yes," added Sam; "the Garden of Eden itself would have been found 'impossible' by most of us, on account of its distance from Boston."

Emily and her daughter Margaret had promised to spend the night with Mary; and the little girl was enthusiastic over her aunt's appearance, as she stood

thoughtfully before the fireplace, after the last guest had gone. "Aunt Mary, I never in my life saw anybody as beautiful as you are in that wine-colored velvet," she said. "When I grow up I am going to have a dress just like it, with a long, long train."

"Run away now, Margaret! your mamma and I are tired. Oh, how tired I am!" Mary said, sinking into a chair. "If I were only sure that Janet was going to be happy, I should feel differently about this marriage," she added, after her little niece had left the room. "But I know John so much better than she does, that I am sure she will be disappointed in him when the glamour wears off. She can't help being irritated by his faults then. He is so unpunctual, so careless of conventionalities, so disorderly, and he has such a quick temper; and after all, it is the little things that make daily life easy or difficult. And what have they to look forward to? Nothing but narrow means and exile for the rest of their lives."

"Perhaps John will be so successful that they will come back in a few years."

"Never! I know him well enough to be certain that he will always be poor."

"I suppose it is true that they will never be rich; but it does n't matter, for they are so happy, and they will be happier still ten years hence. You don't believe me," Emily added, for her sister was shaking her head sceptically; "but that is because you have never been in love."

"I can't understand her being 'in love' with John."

"Why not? He is a charming man, and then he is such a good lover."

"That is the trouble with him," Mary said vehemently; "he is so monumental. You don't know how wearying it is to have a man of that type in love with you; for Sam, with all his faults, has a 'light touch' about him."

Emily laughed. "I am sure you had no reason to complain of John; he was undemonstrative enough with you."

"It was n't what he said, it was n't what he did; it was the feeling that a volcano was sitting by my side, full of pent up emotion that might burst forth at any moment. Oh, how thankful I am that I did n't marry him, under the mistaken idea that his life would be spoiled if I did not! I cannot understand how a man can get over such a strong feeling so quickly, but they all do it. I only wish that he had transferred his affections to some Texas girl, since he can transfer them so easily. I always thought unselfishness was his chief quality, but he has shown himself as selfish as the rest of the world in carrying off a delicate, fragile girl to the wilds of Texas. And as for Janet herself, it passes my comprehension how she could give up everything, — home, friends, society, intellectual stimulus, opportunities for doing good, and all else that is included in the word 'Boston,' cheerfully, without the slightest struggle, for the sake of as common-place a man as John Graham."

"Some day when you are in love yourself, you will understand."

"I shall never be in love," Mary replied emphatically, "for I see things too plainly; and men when seen without the veil of illusion are so trying, they have such aggravating ways. And then I can't

really with my heart believe in 'love,' but only with my intellect, which tells me there must be such a thing, to account for the eccentricities of mankind. The idea of living with Cousin Mary is a far more agreeable prospect than the thought of giving up my independence to any *man;* women are so much more companionable than men."

"All the same, I predict that you will fall in love and marry like the rest of the world some day."

"Never! an *engagement* has been quite enough for me."

Margaret, who had been listening to the whole conversation from behind the portière in the other room, came in at this point. "Darling Aunt Mary," she said, as she threw her arms around her, "I am never going to marry, either. I have been decided about it ever since I was five years old. We will keep house together."

"I can think of nothing that would be nicer," Mary said, returning her embrace with greater warmth than she had ever shown John Graham.

THE END.

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